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VERSES

Frank A. Hickernell

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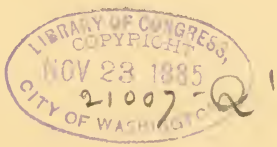
VERSES

BY

FRANCIS ALLEN HILLARD



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PREFACE.

THESE verses, like many other children—being born,—are sent into the world without much apology. They are the offspring of the scant leisure of a busy and not over-smooth life ; and were chiefly created for the idle pleasure of an often careless and hasty writer.

Nevertheless, partial friends seem to think they have enough strength of wing to fly and take care of themselves. I hope it is so. If not, they will merely sink into that oblivion which has engulfed so many worthier and more earnest efforts.

F. A. H.

CONTENTS.

	PAGE
PRELUDE	1
SONNET—FIERCELY WAR'S IRON SHARE	3
THE SIEGE OF BUDA	3
LIBERTY AND UNION	6
VICTORY	9
THE VOLUNTEER	12
THE INVADER	14
A DEAD LOVE	15
THE CONTENTED HEART	16
THE POET'S PEN	17
RETROSPECTION	19
SONG—OVER THE IVORY KEYS	21
TO BESSIE	22
LOVE'S SCHEDULE	24
LIFE'S OASIS	26
MEMORY	27
AN APOLOGY	28
THE SOUL'S CRY	30
LINES—HERE'S A BUNCH OF FADED FLOWERS	32
LINES ON A SEA-SHELL	34
THE LARK	35
LOVE'S LESSON	37
NIGHT	39
A VISION	41
SONNET—WHEN FROM THE NARROW ROUND	43
COUNTERPARTS	44
LORRAINE	45
A SKETCH—NOT CALM, YET PASSIONLESS	46
A SKETCH—A KISS AND A THOUGHT	47
SILVER WEDDING	49
TO THE DANDELION	51
EXPECTANCY	55

PAGE

To E. C. 56
An Errand 57
A Greeting 59
The Leaf 61
A Sea-Fog 62
What Is Life? 64
Life's Lost Bloom 65
Regret 66
Love and Wrath 67
Sonnet—Shall I Have Comfort? 68
Sonnet—I Am Thy Very Slave 69
Sonnet—When in the Dewy Morning . . . 70
Sonnet—When from the Poet's Precinct . . 71
Sonnet—Had I but Seen Thee 72
Sonnet—Could I but Venture 73
Sonnet—The Curious Eye may Watch . . . 74
Sonnet—If Thou Didst Love Me 75
Sonnet—When I Review the Tablets . . . 76
Sonnet—December 25, '76 77
To H. L. H. 78
Sonnet—Lo! While I Write 81
Sonnet—See Where Art's Wizard 82
Semper Fidelis 83
Sonnet—O God! When I Do Think 84
Impromptu—Love Me while yet 'tis Day . . 85
Over the Wave 86
Twin Hearts 87
Echo 88
To Bessie 90
Two Mirrors 92
Love and Death 93
The Withered Rose 94
Song—Sing Me no More 95
Song—Sing Me a Song, Love! 96
Love's Coming 97
Medusa 99
Mine 101
To Mrs. S. 103

PAGE

Love's Memorial 104
Lures 105
Weep and Lament, Fond Maiden 106
Love's Sovereignty 107
Love's Lament 108
A Health 110
Impromptu—Dear Love! Art Worn and Weary . 111
Unconscious Gifts 112
Song—Fresher Than is the Earth 114
Undying Circles 115
Lost 117
To H. 119
Thoughts Suggested by the Destruction of the Rotunda 121
To B——. A Double Acrostic Charade . . 123
Charade 125
Threnody 126
He Loves Me—He Loves Me Not 129
Her Graces 131
To Lillie S. 132
Memory 133
Our Flag 135
Sonnet—I Have Been with You Long . . 137
Diana's Feet 138
Sonnet—How Swift that Fatal Autumn Day 140
The Way 141
Let Flowers Plead 142
In Memory of Wm. B. Rogers 143
Midnight, December 24, '84 144

PRELUDE.

THE germ of thought, in silence nursed,
Doth swell beneath the fruitful time,
And into ripened purpose burst;
Till Life, that seemed so barren erst,
Now glows with all a harvest's prime.

And yet I wait till Time's swift wheel,
In glowing travail, brings to me
The groove wherein my thought may steal,—
The chance I seek with passion's zeal,
The golden opportunity.

O soft south winds! ye shake in vain
The breath of buds from fragrant wings;
I scent but wafts from weltering pain;
I see but mists from battle plains—
Prophetic wraiths of perished things.

A banner trailed—a gaping wound;
And, raging like a storm-beat sea,
Fierce waves of conflict sweep the ground;
While from the abyss of strife profound,
Comes wailing, war's dread symphony.

A battle gust that shakes the sky ;
  A trumpet call that stings the blood ;
To whose wild clangor far and nigh,
I hear the uprisen hosts reply,
  And track their course o'er field and flood.

And yet I rest. O senseless heart !
  That waits to greet a laggard fate,
Yet lets the freighted hours depart,
And idly sees, without a start,
  The begging chances at thy gate.

These be our angels in disguise ;
  The elect of God, the soul's preferred.
O lift the veil from purblind eyes,
Quicken dead sense to recognize
  And heed the hour's appealing word,—

The warning voice which cries : Awake !
  Strife is the price of victory.
He conquers not who shuns the stake ;
But he that wills and dares, shall make
  All time his opportunity.

SONNET.

FIERCELY war's iron share hath ploughed the land ;
Rending, for four long cruel years, the sod
Teeming with roots of thrift and peace, and trod
By myriad thousands leagued in union grand.
O thou ! who waved'st the avenging wand,
And smote us in our strength and pride, O God !
Forget not how we kissed the chastening rod ;
How from remotest hill to ocean strand,
A nation gave its awful tithe to thee.
Hear how the land bereaved laments its slain,
Whose bones lie white on every farm and lea.
Remember, Lord ! our holocaust of pain.
Let from this seed a glorious harvest be,
And raise us up, united once again.

THE SIEGE OF BUDA.

They went on, calmly singing national anthems, against the batteries—whose cross-fire vomited death and destruction on them,—and took them without firing a shot ; they who fell falling with the shout, " Hurrah for Hungary ! " And so they died by thousands, the unnamed demi-gods ! "—*Kossuth's speech at Birmingham.*

BENEATH high Buda's walls, with awful tread,
A serried legion moved ; not with the cry
Of doggèd hirelings, but instinct and dread
With God-like truth and glorious majesty,

Those delegates of God bore on ; and high
Above the hellish din, the battle's sound,
They sang the soul-born hymns of liberty.
And so with songs of father-land were crowned
The deeds of those who fought and fell on Buda's
sacred ground.

So marched the people's nameless sons, so found
'Mid flashing flame, a thousand nameless graves,
And bathed in blood the unregenerate ground.
Yet still the soul moved on in issuing waves
Of inextinguishable presence, such as laves
And throbbing fills the unbounded realms of light :
And still that resurrection chant made slaves
Be seized with prophesying fear and flight—
Pale, wan precursors of its omnipresent might.

And so they died—these demi-gods of earth !
O'er filmy eye, and form's infirmity,
God's smile grew fixed in monumental death ;
And pallid lips turned mortal pain's last cry
Into one wild, " Hurrah for Hungary ! "
And so they died. O Earth ! art thou not proud
That dust so consecrate was born of thee ?
Thou Mother, in whose dusky womb, the crowd
Of unborn deeds lies quickening,—from whose
breast the loud

And yearning cry of outraged life wails deep—
Truth's birth-song pæaned stern 'mid throes of
pain—
Take, take thy dead to thy untroubled sleep !
Thou gav'st them life ; they, free as summer rain,

Poured out their life-blood on thy trampled plain,
And gave thee all of Heaven that life can give,
When it, ennobled, falls to dust again.
Bear up o'er them no precious shaft ; believe
No richer record than themselves canst thou receive.

For freedom's grave, no spot hath earth to lend.
They cannot die,—they live ! In every gale
That fans the freeman's breast, they greeting send.
They rend the tyrant's strength, the captive's chains,
And through the prison bars, on wrong and pain
They blaze in light, and power and patience shed.
Before their coming, tyranny shall pale ;
And the strong spirits that in suffering bled,
Shall swell in acts, the power that sleeps not with the dead.

Who lives for fame, he doubly dies indeed.
Who in himself acts out the inward life,
He lives immortal,—crowned with the high meed
Of angels, and of God-born truth ; nor strife,
Nor taunts of man, his soul can ever rive
From its high purpose. His bright spirit's gaze,
With glance prophetic, sweeps o'er maddening life
Around, and sees, far down the shadowy days,
Each spark of truth rekindled to undying blaze.

LIBERTY AND UNION, ONE AND INSEPARABLE.

THERE floats our glorious ensign,
There still our Eagles fly!
And lives the coward heart or hand
Dare pluck them from the sky?

Dare raise the parricidal arm,
With impious grasp to seize,
And tear from out the firmament,
The glory of the breeze?

The curse of Cain on him who wields
The brand of civil war,
Or blots from that proud galaxy
One single gleaming star.

Still floats our glorious ensign,
And still our Eagles soar;
Yet weeping eyes now fear to gaze,
And see them fly no more.

O brethren in the Union strong!
Bethink ye of the day
When our sires, beneath that banner,
Rushed eager to the fray;

When first its glories were unfurled
O'er freedom's sacred ground,

And thirteen States confederate stood,
In loyal union bound.

Its stripes were dyed at Monmouth,
In Brandywine's red stream,
On Saratoga's trampled plain,
By Lexington's sad green.

Its stars shone out on Bunker's height,
Fort Moultrie saw them gleam,
And high o'er Yorktown's humbled camp,
They flashed in dazzling sheen.

Rise, souls of martyred heroes ;
Rise from your troubled grave,
And guard once more our Union,
Our broken country save !

Rise, Stark from old New Hampshire,
Rise, Lincoln from the Bay,
Rise, Sumpter from the rice fields,
As on that glorious day !

Again, o'er broad savannahs,
Rise Marion's swart brigade,
Whose fiery tramp, like whirlwind rush,
Swept down the everglade !

Why now sleeps Henry's patriot heart,
Why Otis' tongue of flame ;
Hancock and Adams, live they yet,
Or live they but in name ?

They cannot die! immortal truth
Outlasts the shock of time,
And fires the faithful human heart
With energy sublime.

They live! on every hill and plain,
By every gleaming river,
Where'er their glowing feet have trod,
They live, and live forever.

The memory of the past shall raise
Fresh altars to their name;
And coming years, with reverent hand,
Protect the sacred flame.

We know no North, nor South, nor West,
One Union binds us all;
Its stars and stripes are o'er us flung,—
'Neath them we'll stand or fall.

Then stay your hands, ye traitor host!
And cease your vain endeavor;
God guards our Union, great and strong,
Forever and forever.

He sleepeth not like heroes dead,
And mould'ring in the grave;
His outstretched arm is quick to smite,
Omnipotent to save.

Lo! he shall break the coward hand,
And brand the traitor knave,
With more than Arnold's deathless shame,—
With his accursèd grave.

VICTORY.

ANOTHER day—the last—
Beholds my work undone ;
For these dim eyes shall see
No morrow's sun.

These hands so white and thin,
Through which the sunbeams stray,
Shall fold themselves to-night,—
Be laid away.

How little have they wrought
In all these weary years ;
What heart more filled with hope,
What life with tears ?

'Tis well. God gives to each
Of strength a different rate ;
Some more, and others less,
As is their fate.

I have no wish to scan
The record fading fast ;
Its strife and aims and fears
Are of the past.

I leave them all to Him
Who garners up life's deeds,

Hoping amongst my chaff
Are some good seeds.

My thoughts are fastened now
Upon the hour at hand,
While I have strength to mark
Its rushing sand.

This hand which held the sword,
Trembling and feeble grown,
Clings to thy garments, Lord!
Lead thou me on.

These eyes so keen to mark
The blaze of musketry,
Now thro' the gathering shades
See only thee.

Lead me till day be done;
Lead, till the shadows fleet
Bring rest—my burden cast
Low at thy feet.

No breast whereon to lean,
No loving hand in mine
To soothe me till the last,
Save only thine.

I murmur not; I, too,
Am counted as thine own;
Thy banner shadows me,
No more alone.

Just as I am, I come—
  Patient, tho' wounded sore;
Content in thy great love,
  Nor asking more.

I would not alter now
  The past with all its loss;
He still can grant the crown
  Who gave the cross.

Long-bearing one! bear on
  A little farther still,
Until this waiting heart
  Yields to thy will.

Still fling thy banner out:
  However dim it be,
I feel its presence near—
  Its stars I see.

I follow where it leads,
  Tho' dark the way may be;
For 'neath its folds are light and life
  And victory.

THE VOLUNTEER.

O Mother Earth ! wert thou not proud
When he, my noble boy, lay bowed
Upon thy blood-stained breast, and found
His fate undimmed by sigh or tear ?
Though swarthy cheeks were wet around
My heart's great love, my Volunteer.

His father lived within the lad,—
Save Heaven, 'twas all the joy I had—
Yet when our country called to arms
Her patriot children far and near,
I tore him from these trembling arms,
And bade God-speed my Volunteer.

Good-by, I cried ! Dear Heaven ! my life
Seemed bursting with the bitter strife ;
To stand and smile, nor let him see
The quiv'ring lip, the blinding tear,
And all the untold agony
Of parting with my Volunteer.

He bore him bravely in the fight ;—
So resolute of soul, so bright,
So grand in his humility.
And many a cheek grew white with fear,
When like an angel, fair and free,
He led the charge,—my Volunteer.

Comrades ! he feared not lurid death,
Whose touch was but the balmy breath,
That waked his fleeting soul to light.
God bless, he cried, my country dear !
Then like a shroud fell gentle night,
And wrapped my dear, dead Volunteer.

Earth hath no grave for such as he,
Who fought and fell for liberty ;
The nation's heart is his proud shrine.
God keep his memory green and clear,
And purer grow throughout all time,
The soul that stirred my Volunteer.

A glory haunts my life around ;
I seem to stand on holy ground ;
And life and love are dearer grown,
Than when my darling boy was here.
Yet, Death, come quickly ! claim thy own,
Restore me to my Volunteer.

THE INVADER.

A sudden turmoil shook my heart,
The streams of love 'gan flowing ;
And what at first seemed only smart,
Sweet with the pains of growing,
Is now augmented to a fire
That wakes desire ;
That breaks my sleep,
And makes me weep,
And cry, O ! fie upon the wanton boy,
That doth my heart so trouble and annoy.

I shut my eyes—those flood-gates wide,
Tho' narrow at the portals ;
But, ah ! too late, within I spied
The unbid guest of mortals ;
My ears likewise, lest I should hear
The invader near ;
Yet in my breast
He makes his nest,
Within, without, he is ;—O wanton boy !
Why dost thou thus a feeble maid annoy ?

Why close my lips ? my silly tongue
Can say no one thing, other
Than to rehearse the songs he sung,
Nor ask to learn another.
So vanquished quite, my days I pass,
With face like glass,

Where all may see
What aileth me,
And cry in blissful pain : O ! wanton boy,
Forever stay tho' thou dost still annoy.

Ah, maiden fair, with fancy free,
When Love thy breast assails,
It boots not what defence there be,
For his sweet strength prevails.
Quick to thy heart, thro' eye and lip,
He'll slyly skip ;
Make entrance there
Ere thou'rt aware ;
Then shalt thou cry with me : O ! wanton boy,
Do as thou wilt, I love thee to annoy.

A DEAD LOVE.

O ROSE ! within my bloomy croft,
Where hidden sweets compacted dwell,
The wanton wind with breathings soft,
To perfect flower thy bud shall swell ;
Then steal thy rich perfume,
Tarnish both grace and bloom,
Until, thy pearly prime being past,
Withered and dead thou'lt lie at last.

O gleaming night ! whose cloudy hair
Waves dark amid its woven light,
Bestudded thick with jewels rare,
Than royal diadems more bright ;

Lo ! the white hands of day
Shall strip thy gauds away,
And in the twilight of the morn,
Mock thy estate with cold-eyed scorn.

My love, O Rose ! hath had a day
As fair, a fate as quick as thine ;
All wrapped in perfumed sleep I lay
Till my fond fancies grew divine,
And sweet Elysium seemed
Around me as I dreamed.
The Rose is dead ; the dawn comes fast ;
Joy dies, but grief awakes at last.

THE CONTENTED HEART.

LO ! I am poor ; my scrip is scant ;
I scarce removèd am from want,
And yet I sing.
Having no wealth, I am not vexed,
Nor is my patient soul perplexed,
With cares that wring.
I see that riches have their flight,
That want of goods makes burdens light ;
And so I sing.

My mind to me is richer far,
Than all the gems of India are,
And so I sing.
And when in golden mesh I weave
The threads of thought I do conceive,

I am a king.
I envy none and laugh at state ;
No sovereign rules my heart elate,
Or bids me sing.

Grant me, O Fate ! with kindly deed,
A lot removed from wealth and need,
That I may sing :
Riches of heart and soul so blent,
That all my life shall be content,
Nor crave one thing ;
Lest I thy fair endowment scorn,
And, making my scant years forlorn,
So cease to sing.

THE POET'S PEN.

I AM an idle reed ;
I rustle in the whispering air,
I bear my stalk and seed,
Thro' spring-time's glow and summer's glare.

And in the fiercer strife
Which winter brings to me amain,
Sapless I waste my life,
And, murmuring at my fate, complain.

I am a worthless reed ;
No golden top have I for crown,
No flower for beauty's meed,
No wreath for poet's high renown.

Hollow and gaunt, my wand
Shrill whistles, bending in the gale ;
Leafless and sad I stand,
And, still neglected, still bewail.

O foolish reed, to wail !
A poet came with downcast eyes,
And wandering thro' the dale,
Saw thee and claimed thee for his prize.

He plucked thee from the mire ;
He pruned and made of thee a pen,
And wrote in words of fire,
His flaming song to listening men.

Till thou so lowly bred,
Now wedded to a nobler state,
Utt'rest such pæans overhead,
That angels listen at their gate.

RETROSPECTION.

OVER the goblet's mantling brim
The bubbles foam and rise ;
I see the tiny globules swim,
Through half-averted eyes.

Untasted lies the golden wine,
Nor seeks my lips the draught ;
My thirsting soul craves drink divine,
Such as immortals quaffed.

Sad thought goes wandering thro' the maze,
Manhood and youth between ;
And sees beyond the purple haze,
Diviner bloom and green.

Come back ! O blossom-laden hours !
When life and hope were young ;
When Fancy haunted verdurous bowers,
And magic round me flung.

Renew the light, disperse the gloom ;
All their fond hopes renew,—
The sunshine golden and the bloom
That childhood o'er them threw.

They come ! for memory awakes,
And softly paints anew,

The glow and flame that boyhood takes,
When we the past review.

Her airy bridge far spans the gloom,
And o'er the chasm wide,
Fair forms, long tenants of the tomb,
Like cloudy vapors glide.

O visions ! how like ghosts ye rise,
Wan relics of the past ;
My soul goes out in spectre guise,
And strives to hold you fast.

But when I fain would substance clasp,
Like false lights on the moor ;
The gleaming fires elude my grasp,
And leave me nothing sure.

The fires of youth no longer burn,
Its dreams are fled for aye ;
Nor can my footsteps backward turn,
Or leave their destined way.

Well, be it so ! 'tis joy to feel
That sadness is not gloom ;
That fleeting time can never steal
Youth's radiance or perfume.

Still oft shall we the past retrace,
And draw from Life's young page,
Thoughts that shall smooth the wrinkled face,
And stir the blood of Age.

And when we scan time's later leaf,
We guess the tardy truth,
And find in all our visions brief
Types of immortal youth.

Then take the wine whose bubbling rings
Expand in liquid light ;
My soul hath drunk from unseen springs,
Ambrosial wine to-night.

SONG.

OVER the ivory keys,
To and fro her white hands go ;
As over bloom-laden trees,
The wandering touch of the breeze
Wakes music soft and low.

Flash ! radiant fingers of light ;
Silver the gloom of the shadowed room ;
Sweep with your gleaming tips,
Over the white frozen lips,
Till they break from their tomb.

Smite ! smite the white lips of song ;
Break on the keys like stormy seas ;
Be the flashing spray-notes flung
Like cries from anguish wrung —
Anguish that knows no peace.

O soul of grief ! fold hands and cease ;
No stormy song can drown thy wrong,
No murm'ring music whisper peace.
Grief such as thine must find release
In silence, not in song.

TO BESSIE.

DEAR BESS, sweet Bess ! our little love,
Old Time with you seems playing ;
Such sunbeams round your footsteps rove,
Such joyance marks their straying.

He gently slips your blooming hours,
With fingers still delaying ;
So flushed with mirth, so twined with flowers,
I think they're all gone Maying.

Forever thus, old Father Time !
Deal gently with our treasure ;
Henceforth, as in her budding prime,
Contentment give and pleasure.

We ask for her no laurel crown,
The poet's brow o'erlying ;
No wreath that's won for high renown,
With life-blood and with dying.

No pomp of pride, nor fashioned mien,
No mind the face belying ;
In both let one design be seen,
And truth and love undying.

Such share of beauty we would ask,
As may not wrong the giving ;
Such share of wealth as may not task,
Nor dull the sense of living.

The rest to thee, thou gray-beard friend !
We dare no more petition ;
Nor ask what changes shall attend,
What limits, what condition.

Along the scarcely printed way
Which you, dear Bess, are speeding,
He's rolling onward with a sway,
You're far too young for heeding.

His glowing wheel shall onward whirl,
With you and all things human ;
And ere you think you're more than girl,
You'll find yourself a woman.

But we who dance the dizzy reel,
Beguiled with day-dreams shining,
Shall sink beneath his west'ring wheel,
And see our day declining.

Perchance, when that not distant time
Your being is unfolding,
Your eyes may scan this sober rhyme,
And wonder while beholding ;

And smile, that your first valentine,
Should run with bodings over ;
Nor pause to think who penned each line,
Was father both and lover.

Come, winter stern, with snowy wing,
Each season come in order!
Our hearts shall keep perennial spring,
With you, dear Bess, for warder.

LOVE'S SCHEDULE.

FINGERS slender, fingers fine!
Clasp my meaner hand in thine;
Dainty fingers, soft and strong,
Clasp me sweetly, clasp me long.

Shell-like nails of purest pink,
Tipped with streaks of rosy dawn;
Such fine suffusion, I do think,
Saw never shell nor early morn.

Palms of pearl, and moist as buds:
Love rides their violet lines, and lends
Such tinglings to their tiny floods,
I feel the heart at finger ends.

Arms of ivory—nay! not so:
Was ivory e'er so rounded;
Can stuff or art such glory show,
To be with life confounded?

Her arms are flesh and blood, yet quite
Such rolling lines, such radiant skin,
So roundly firm, so fairly white,
Few mortals e'er have seen.

A gleaming neck, in glorious state,
  Springs shaft-like to a dome,
That's fitted for her mind elate,—
  Its temple and its home.

Her eyes, like pools in shadow, gleam,
  Thick fringed with lashes long,—
Wherein her inmost soul is seen,
  Such true reflections throng.

O'erarched with brows whose glossy lines
  Sweep true as heavenly bow ;
A front where awful beauty shines,
  To warn imperious foe.

Royal creature, perfect woman !
  Heaven that made thee most divine,
Left thee still enough of human
  To enslave this heart of mine.

Higher she, I dare not love her,
  But must worship and adore ;
Now, my life delights to prove her
  Each day worthier than before.

Nor tongue nor pen can ever tell
  What varied virtues shine ;
Nor half the charms that sweetly dwell,
  Within that soul divine.

Ah ! who the mistress, who the youth ?
  Discover if you can.
The maid was won in simple truth,
  And I'm the happy man.

LIFE'S OASIS.

AS when some pilgrim from a distant clime,
With pious feet doth shrine-ward wend his way,
Cheering with scraps of prayer and holy rhyme
His God-directed course from day to day ;
At length in wastes whose shifting sands obey
The freaksome winds, and whelm the traveller lorn,
He loses heart and recks not where he strays ;
His weary limbs drag down his soul forlorn,
And o'er the dreary sea he wanders aimless on.

But lo ! when fainting 'neath the unequal strife,
A bright gem, throned upon the horizon's ring,
Doth bind once more his divorced hopes to life,
Entranced he views, while airs uprising, bring
Odors of balm on spirit-healing wing,
And palm-trees green their wide-armed welcome wave.
Aimless no more, he flies ; and round him cling
Strange joys and hopes he did not look to have ;
And he doth bless the sand that wellnigh proved his grave.

So I, a pilgrim o'er life's heart-dimmed way,
Shoonless and palmless, drag my way-worn feet
On to the shrine of immortality ;
Lone wandering 'mid the crowd, few pleasures greet ;

But lingering hope rude storms do from me beat,
And o'er the silent heart shade deepening lowers,
Building for meditation sad retreat,—
Yet like not cooling shade to summer flowers,
It brings no life nor beauty to the faded hours.

But in my loneliness, fair one, thou hast
Beamed like a joy-spot in the wilderness ;
And from that cup which all are doomed to taste,
Hath dashed some portion of the bitterness ;
And in my heart's most lone and dim recess,
Sweet memories of thy brightness long shall dwell.
My staff and scrip once more resumed, with less
Of pain I'll on, yet o'er my heart-strings swell,
Feelings which fain would thank thee ere I bid
farewell.

MEMORY.

STAND by the funeral bier
Of her whose heart was thine own,
And dash off each falling tear,
And stifle each heart-wrung groan ;
List to the mourner's fitful wail,
And say, welcome is death's potion ;
Then think o'er her form so pale,
Of the end of life's devotion.

Go where the desert vast
Spreadeth round its trackless plain ;
Watch the whirling wind go past,
With its load of blinding rain ;

And think when it o'erwhelms thee,
And thy sense in torture fails,
Of its breezes soft and balmy,
In thy own dear native vales.

Talk of the noble name,
Of hearts which time cannot sever ;
When the head is bowed with shame,
And hope has fled for ever.
Look back to childhood brief,
From thy birthday in December,
And say to the heart embittered by grief,
'Tis pleasant to remember.

AN APOLOGY.

FORGIVE the crime, the careless word
I uttered but in jest.
Ah ! had you but the murmurs heard
Reproachful in my breast,

Or seen the arrow, random driven,
Recoiling, pierce my heart,
Thou wouldst have known, to me was given
The anguish and the dart.

Could I, who drank the joys that throng
Around thy lips alway,
Ungrateful wrong the soul of song
That animates thy lay !

Believe it not : as soon the star
Shall wrong its diamond light ;
The sun his course, the moon her car
With silver beams bedight ;

The pious hand despoil the urn,
Uphold the tyrant's part,
Or with religious stroke out-turn
The fountains of the heart.

Believe all this,—but still believe,
In the deep cells below,
Where busy fancies tissues weave
Of heavenly hue and glow,—

The brightest threads that o'er its woof
Joy's polished shuttle flings
Are drawn for weary heart's behoof,
From thy lyre's golden strings.

Tumultuous thro' each feeling deep,
Thy aërial breathings roll,
Waking from sad perturbèd sleep
The music of the soul.

Know smiles may dance like moonlight, o'er
A waste of barren gloom ;
O'er eye and lip their radiance pour,
Like sunlight round a tomb ;

And tones of air, and boisterous mirth,
From lips are lightly flung,
To crush each feeling in its birth,
Which falters on the tongue.

Then deem me not so dull of sense
For favors dear conferred ;
For thoughts flow deep when most intense,
And thrill with thanks unheard.

THE SOUL'S CRY.

FROM out the agony of years,—
Their dust, and sweat, and bitter tears,—
Comes the soul's cry.
Wild through dun clouds of dark despair,
Battles that voice to upper air ;
Strives to be free.

Thy wings are chained with chains of earth ;
And thou with life—to death from birth—
Art prisoner long.
Fret with thy cage ; urge God-like wars ;
Break if thou canst thy prison bars ;—
Ah ! earth is strong.

When I grow weary of my house,
And 'yond the mists that shroud me close
Would farther see ;—
The bitter waters blind my sight.
Thro' eyes of flesh no purging light
Transfigures life to me.

Disordered darkness round me lies ;
O'er my chained strength immuring skies
Chafe like sea waves.

I feel a land beyond the sight;
I own a sphere, whose liquid light
  My vision laves.

O bond-man life, thou slave of clay!
Sunder my weary ties away;
  Or down to thee—
Down to thy dust and kindred night,
Drag me, and quench my feeble light
  Eternally.

Thou watcher on the tower of life!
No longer wage unceasing strife,
  But yield to fate;
Nor hope, in one wild soaring flight,
To reach those realms, supernal, bright,
  Beyond the gate.

Descend, and from initial ground
Build up thy ladder round by round
  In faithful length!
Shrink not from self in coward fear;
From trial draw a balm to cheer;
  From weakness, strength.

Live not within, but ever out.
Thy strength, that grows with every bout,
  Is not thine own.
Lend all men thee, and thou them, power;
A revelation give each hour
  Before 'tis flown.

Shoulder thy burdens without moan ;
The strength that nobly braves alone
Deserves relief.
Gird up thy loins ; convert each scourge
Into a staff that shall thee urge
Up to reprieve.

Till when thou'st reached thy highest climb,
True watchman on the tower of time,
Thou stand'st at last ;
Thou mayst, removed from storm and blight,
Serenely gaze adown the height
On perils past.

LINES.

HERE'S a bunch of faded flowers
Plucked from the freshest bowers
Of June's fair prime !
Scorn not the timid comers,
For they sweetly breathe of summers
'Mid winter-time.

Then take the twisted wreath,
And all of good beneath
Time can't destroy.
O ! many years come round,
Wherein for thee be found
Peace and joy.

And you, ye orphans tender,
Flowerets pale and slender,
Lament no more !
For she to whom I send you
Will tenderly befriend you
Forevermore.

And you shall sigh with balmy breath
Of the violet-covered heath,
Once your home,
Till the wanderer's heart shall brim,
And his eyes with tears grow dim,
As memories come.

Fear not, pale blossoms ! bear our love
In fragrant messages, above
The tongue's endeavor,
She is your sister flower ;—like you
Shall droop, yet still her soul shall be
Fragrant forever.

LINES ON A SEA-SHELL.

THOU painted emblem of the sounding main !
From out thy wreathèd lips, in this lone hour,
There breathes o'er my rapt ear with spirit power
Such wild sequacious sadness,—such a strain
Of lone lamenting, that methinks thou art
The prison of ocean's self, wherein he dreams,
With vibrant murmurs, of his surging heart,
His strength spontaneous, and his world-bright beams.
And thou, O shell of earth ! thou wave-tossed thing
Upon time's shoreless sea, there breathes in thee
A voice eternal that doth ever sing,
With fond continuance, thy home's infinity.
Learn thou the anthems 'neath thy prison roof that swell !
Shame to the soul less faithful than the sea-sand shell.

THE LARK.

THOU little bird that heavenward soar'st,
Up from thy dewy nest !
Thou hast had timely rest ;
So may on nimble wing uprise,
And in the misty skies
Bathe thy sweet breast.

Thou cleav'st the silver shining light
With unrestrainèd wing,
In joyance high to fling,
From out God's granaries above,
Measures of winnowed love
With fanning swing.

Thou floating midge, on golden ray,
Whose line like javelin thrown,
Flies from the fiery sun ;
Thy breast is dashed with ruddy light,
Till in thy sun-clad flight,
Thou seem'st Heaven's own.

The shepherd winds that, piping, drive,
O'er heaven's ethereal plain,
Their fleecy charge amain,
See thee, and airy silence hold,
While all the huddled fold
Sweet respite gain.

Now the rapt swain, that plods below,
Marks thy receding flight,
And ere 'tis lost to sight,
Hears from thy little flutt'ring throat,
Divinest music float
On waves of light.

Hyblaen honey turned to song
The silver aisles among ;
Showers ecstatic wrung,
Dropping in balmy cadence down,
Like nectar, o'er the crown
Of Jove's cup flung.

O beatific song ! whose gushing trills,
Descending dew-like, flow
To listening ears below,
That prisoners yield their charmèd sense
To thy sweet violence,—
Passing all show.

Sweet airling ! may our thoughts, like thee
A nobler region own
Than this with care o'erstrewn ;
Where the strong soul's expanding flight
Shall top a grander height
Than erst was known.

And thou, O sovereign Lord ! who dost
Our daily food provide,
And every good beside ;
The song of life thy psalm shall be,
Thine love and charity
Till eventide.

LOVE'S LESSON.

YOU bid me wait and kick my heels
An idle hour, for you ;
Plainly your flouting air reveals
The game you have in view.

The fish being caught you play the line,—
The silken cord seems sure ;
Yet have a care, O mistress mine !
Or 'twill not long endure.

Hold firm this counsel to your mind :
There's nothing sure in love ;
And man, like maid, you'll fickle find,
Nor less inclined to rove.

You could have made this leaden hour
Fly as on wings of air ;
Each moment given a soul of power,
Had you been kind as fair.

Had but your archer eye shot out
One tender, killing beam,
Minutes a score thou'dst put to rout,
And scattered like a dream.

One wave from that white jewelled hand
Wafting a kiss to me,

My heart's low fires had quickly fanned
To flaming ecstasy.

Or had thy robe but backward flown,
And, gleaming through the door,
The glory of thy fair foot shown,
Perchance suggesting more,—

The sixty minutes of this hour
Had fled unmarked by me ;
One, or a thousand, less or more,
Were pure felicity.

He that from time can pluck the sting,
And absence turn to bliss,
Knows all of heaven that love can bring,
And naught can equal this.

But hearts must match or never mate ;
And there the trouble hangs :
You've barely reached to love's estate
And I've not got to pangs.

Farewell ! force out the appointed time,
And, when it suits, appear ;
Nor deem your lesson thrown away,
Though I may not be here.

NIGHT.

THROUGH thy still hours, O soothing night !
I watch the flashing stars
Sweep down and quench their fires behind
The morning's purple bars.

I hear the rushing of thy wind,
That cools the aching brain ;
That lays the dust of daily strife,
And takes the sting from pain.

When I bemoan my weary lot,
And faint beneath the strain,—
O balm of God ! the night comes down,
And I am strong again ;

Strong in the faith that patient toil
With reverence crowns the day ;
Does honor to the meanest hand,
And smooths the thorniest way ;

Strong in the faith that pain and grief—
The loved ones gone before—
Are but God's delegates, and sent
To make us love man more.

But most I love the blessèd peace
Thy tranquil presence brings,

When mankind doffs its daily yoke
To rest beneath thy wings.

The cares that cloud our dearest life
Roll backward with the day ;
And memory the bloom renews,
And holds with pensive sway.

Then through the star-lit shades come down,
Dreams of a youth long gone ;
Bright visions of a faded past
That vanish with the morn.

Thus, day by day, we spin life's skein,
And night takes up the thread,
And weaves a tissue fair to see,
With golden stars o'erspread.

Then hail, serene and welcome night !
Thou hast no gloom for me ;
I yield the day my feeble strength,
But give my heart to thee.

Let fall thy shades, O solemn night !
Descend with breathing balm ;
My heart grows strong beneath thy wings,
Thy rest and heavenly calm.

A VISION.

WHEN first she caught my sight,
Standing within the lilac's cloudy maze,—
Her airy vesture steeped in purple light,
Her hair with amethystine tints ablaze,—
Confounded with delight,
I stood in still amaze.

Some brooding trance, thought I,
Doth raise a form my life hath toiled to find ;
Some mocking semblance which the dazzled eye
Takes for the image that doth haunt the mind ;—
Some glory from the sky
In its pure self enshrined.

Dear guest of weary years !
I that had sought, repining at my fate ;
Scarce dreaming that the glow which promise wears,
Could flame into fulfilment sweet, though late,—
I welcomed thee with tears,
Humbled and yet elate.

Then fluttering hope, new born,
Soared from the ashes of a wasted fire,
Full to the zenith of a fairer morn.
O blessed bird ! that of my fond desire,
Sang to my soul forlorn,
Sweeter than heavenly choir.

How many years have flown
  Since all my lonely life was counted naught,
Until inseparable with thine own,
  And I grew nobler with thy true love fraught ;
    Since when that love my own
    Benigner graces taught ?

The calendar is brief,
  Yet the sad heart marks not the sum it bears,
When one great woe o'ermasters with its grief,
  And merges hours, and days, and years
    Into one blotted leaf
    Blistered and stained with tears.

I know a sorrow came,
  A glory fled. I know that love divine,
Having once been, must ever be the same ;
  Through trailing clouds its constancy doth shine,
    With clear exalted flame,
    Like a celestial sign.

And thus, though late, my days
  Have wrought the darkness to a light serene :
I look through death at all her gracious ways,
  And see her live in each familiar scene ;
    Within the lilac's maze,
    'Mid alleys ever green.

Within these shadowed walls,
  Her glowing image haunts the eager night,
And all her soul's divinity recalls,
  While each thought, on me, like reverent light,
    A benediction falls,—
    A consecration bright.

SONNET.

WHEN from the narrow round that hems me in,
My chafing spirit rages to get free,
Scorning just laws for natural liberty,
And haughty grown, a wider sphere would win ;
I do bethink me what my lot hath been,
How small vexations like a wasting sea,
Do fret my temper to extremity,
And leave me spent where I would fain begin.
Then say—As Heaven adjusts our strength and weight,
Nor greater burden gives than we can bear,
But each a spirit equal to his fate ;
So my poor task-work done with reverent care,
More hallowed is than aims beyond my state :
Lord ! keep me constant where my duties are.

COUNTERPARTS.

THE soul that finds its counterpart,
Grasps in the circuit of a day,
The love which years oft hide away;
The veiled enigmas of the heart.

O! friend of old, yet newly found,
Come sit once more beside the stream,
Where quivering shafts of sunlight gleam
On birchen boughs and ferny ground.

Here, while we round the golden hour
With interchange of trusting speech,
No sadder thoughts shall come to each,
Than we may find in brook and flower.

The brawling brook o'er moss and stone,
With rippling music slips along,
Ever suggesting some new song;
So, with a low beseeching tone,

You bid me sing. Ah, love! the song
Unwritten evermore should be;
The tender theme inspired by thee,
I cannot borrow words to wrong.

Thou knowest well its every tone,
Interpreted with heart and brain;
What matters then for words to strain
The voice to meanings not its own?

So, when self-singing from its source,
The wordless fount upspringing wells,
Thou knowest that there thy spirit dwells,
To guide its flow and lend it force.

And days and years may come and go,
And hearts grow cold in love or death ;
Yet still the hidden fountain saith,
I sing forever as I flow.

The will grows weak, the body dies ;
But though I sink 'mid wrecks of time,
I shall, exultant and sublime,
Renew the song in paradise.

LORRAINE.

I CANNOT paint thee as I would : the hue
That blooms upon thy cheek, is but the glow
From thy translucent spirit,—flushes that flow
From the pure chastity of womanhood ;
Lustre from vestal flames, that, fed anew,
Perpetual burn, though hidden from the view.
So still a spirit, such meek brightness, would
Chasten the gazer to a kindred mood.
An eye brimmed with the calm of placid love,
Unmixed with passion or with thoughts that rove ;
Pure lips, whose ruddy fulness thread with bliss
The loving thoughts they coin to words ; that kiss
With cleansing pressure all the ambient air,

And make about a purer atmosphere.
A soul serene, Madonna-like, enshrined
In her dear self ; at ease, and free from pain ;—
Such is our golden one, our dear Lorraine.

A SKETCH.

NOT CALM, YET PASSIONLESS.

LOW at her side I sat, as oft before,
Filled with sweet pain and hungry for her love ;
And as I read, the ardent mood within
Lent to the words a pathos and a fire
That suited well the stirring tale they told ;
And she, all rapt in soul, unconscious, hung
Upon my speech. I rather felt than saw
The fixèd eye, the parted lips, and all
The rising tumult of her breast. Her breath
With fitful sighings fanned my burning cheek ;
Then as I reached the story's moving spell,
With sudden sob—half joy, and sorrow half—
She flung the rounded glory of her arms
About me, and, with vehemence most sweet,
My head did lap upon her heaving breast.
One moment, like a soul in bliss, I lay
Encircled with a panting, boundless joy,—
A moment only, while her every pulse
Sent liquid flame through all my throbbing veins,
And brought me to Elysium. Sighing still,
As one relieved from some fixed state or trance—
She slow relaxed those glowing bands, and bade
Me still go on. O cruel task ! O dream,

From which I waked! So, with an iron will,
I crushed the semblance of my stormy mood,
Smoothed the sharp bitterness I could not hide,
And with what calm I could, slowly resumed.
Ah, me! there was no sex in all that act;
No conscious shame was seen in those rapt eyes;
No bashful memory followed in her mind.
So might she thus have clasped some agèd crone,
Or, in her high emotion, flung her arms
Around some marble shaft,—some sculptured saint.
She sat like Vesta, on a virgin throne,
Giving to all, yet not receiving, fire;
Full, glowing, round; not calm, yet passionless;
Human perfection, yet without the seal
That stamps and ratifies true womanhood.

A SKETCH.

A KISS AND A THOUGHT.

A PERFUMED glove upon a radiant hand;
A breath of violets haunting the still room;
And on her pure white face a purer light.
At her sweet bidding I unclasped the glove;
And as I touched the glory of that hand,
And felt its tingling pulses throb along
Their purple highway,—with a sudden clasp,
And blush, I straightway raised the jewelled prize,
And without leave did press my lips thereto.
Did I do wrong? Ah, me, I cannot tell!
She did not snatch it from me angrily,
Yet with a gentle force it slipped away;

And slowly too, I thought. A faint surprise
Rounded the beauty of her eyes ; and slow,
Like the coming of some faint memory,
A pensive pleasure crossed her soulful face,
That quickly lapsed into its wonted calm.
I do remember well the blessed time :
She, looking softly at the self-same hand,
With a chaste freedom waved it toward me,
Gave me a pleasant word, and so passed on
Serene in royal calm, her flowing garb
Wafting the air as with cool breath of flowers ;
And I, being aflame with new-made bliss,
Straightway did flee to utmost solitude,
There, undisturbed, to dream and nurse my joy.
O lips ! I fondly cried, thou shouldst not know
Or food or drink, nor baser pleasures seek,
Save but to sing her praise in tender song ;
Else shalt thou then betray thy sacred trust.
'Twas thus the fire of youth did kindle zeal.
Alas ! I know full well that idle words
And contact insincere shall touch my lips,
And rob them of the perfume of that hand ;
Yet still the memory of its touch shall be
A presence that shall stir my tongue to cry :
O Lord ! turn thou my lips away from sin,
And keep them pure and chaste for her dear sake.

SILVER WEDDING.

FULL five-and-twenty years have flown
Since first I called the maid my own ;
Yet when I backward cast my sight,
So fair the view, so soft the light,
So trackless seems the unbroken way,
Such rainbow glories round it play,
I scarcely heed the flying hours,
Whose course is only marked by flowers.
Glide softly, golden hours along,
And Time, thou listen to my song !

I hold that he who lives content,
A life in cheerful service spent,
With reverence crowns the fleeting hours,
And decks his heart with living flowers,
Whose backward floating fragrance must
E'en consecrate the silent dust.
I hold that he whose heart is young,
Shall doubly live his kind among ;
And feel, through all life's toils and tears,
Age is not all a thing of years.

So I am young—as youthful now,
When from my hair and from my brow
The filching hand of time hath ta'en
The trophies yielded without pain,
As when the bounding blood of youth

Filled my boy's heart with hope and truth,
And dreams, whose tender lights still play
Like sunset hues along the way.
With sweet content I greet the years,
And rainbows see 'twixt smiles and tears.

And thou, dear one, my better part,
Hear this fond tribute from my heart.

Hail wedlock, holy sacrament !
To yearning souls in mercy sent ;
Not those curst bonds which bind the life
Of hearts that sundered are in strife ;
Whose mocking mirth scarce lights the gloom,
But plays like bale-fire round a tomb ;
Nor the more mercenary tie
Of those who barter liberty,
To flaunt above a hateful wrong,
And hide with wreaths the chafing thong.
My thought a nobler subject moves :
I sing the marriage of true loves,—
The love that time nor chafes nor binds,
Fixed as the rocks, yet free as winds ;
A balance which, 'mid griefs and joys,
Still holds its matchless equipoise ;
That grows and strengthens as it grows,
Through summer heats and winter snows ;
Though giving much, receiving more,
And giving most doth most increase its store ;

That like Orion's belt of light,
Steadfast and clear burns through the night,

And high above the tempest's form,
Still shines nor wavers in the storm.
This is the love which through my day
Hath shared and cheered my devious way ;
God's holy angel, kindly given
To lend to earth foretaste of heaven ;
Soaring through space, o'er life and death,
Mortality's immortal wreath.

Flow gently, tide, thy flowers among,
And weave me garlands for my song ;
Glide softly, golden hours along,
Till time rounds each day into song !

TO THE DANDELION.

WHETHER beneath hedge-rows old,
On emerald lawn smooth rolled,
In gay parterre or alley green,
Where wanderer's feet have ever been ;
Be it when the pearly dawn
Opes the winking lids of morn,
Or the fiery blaze of noon
Fades the lily all too soon,
Or when the lengthened shadows pass
Athwart the fresh enamelled grass ;—
Where'er my devious footsteps turn,
I see thy golden glories burn,
Thy burnished disc uprise,—
Such a brightness, such a yellow,
Never yet had mortal fellow.

Thy face, uplifted to the skies,
Hath gazed so long upon the sun,
That thou his ardent flame hast won,
His heart of fire, his golden hair,
And all of his that flower can share.
Never yet so dark a place
But was lightened by thy rays.

O royal gold on nature's green !
Such matchless harmony, I ween,
Painter's hand or poet's brain
In work or dream can ne'er attain,
Though they draw each glowing hue
From the sunlight and the dew.
King and glory of the sward !
Begot by earth, by sun adored,
While around me, far and nigh,
Thy beaming splendor I espy.
I have quaint thoughts of thee,
And many a pretty fantasie,
As thou sitt'st in gleaming gold,
Lending lustre to the mold ;
Reflecting light on all around,
Flowers and grass and tawny ground.

Methinks I see the flying night,
Before the morn's pursuing light,
Gather her dusky robes in haste,
And, wan and sad, across the waste
Sweep like a wingèd sorrow wild,
Moaning like a heaven-lost child ;
Then part in anger, more in grief—
Sorrow that needs must have relief,—

She plucks from her bright jewelled zone,
The stars that burn for her alone,
And proudly flings the glittering hoard
Broadcast upon the earth's green sward ;
That there renewed, proud day, in thee,
May feel her perpetuity.

Though thy name may never be
Linked with the large-eyed pansy,
With daisy or with daffodil,
Or the thousand flowers that fill
The idler's fancy or the poet's dream ;
And though thy glories never gleam
In garlands woven for the brow
Which fame or beauty doth endow ;
Nor lover, looking in thine eye,
Bewail in blissful ecstasy,
Nor find thy burnished petals move
His pensive heart to songs of love,
Striving thy beauties to rehearse,
" Linked to an immortal verse " ;
Thou hast been a golden prize
To the wonder-loving eyes
Of the babe, that in its mirth
Pranked upon the gladsome earth ;
To the pleasure-seeking child
Ere the touch of care defiled ;
With shining joy and merry din,
Holding out the dimpled chin,
Whereon thy yellow gleams might prove,
If the elf did butter love ;
Or thy stars they quickly try on,
A belt as bright as old Orion ;

Now crowning heads with glory meet,
Now trampled under heedless feet ;
No youth so young, no age so old,
But kindly greets thy disc of gold.

What though thou art not prized so high
As buds less glowing to the eye,
And still, the sport of idle hour
Art deemed a common way-side flower !
Thou dost but share the fate of all
The blessings that to life befall.
The moon and stars, the o'erarching sky,
The drifted clouds that midway lie,
The earth and sea, and every phase
Which nature lends to grace our days,
Are with our beings so allied,
They're scarcely known until denied.
Custom but blunts the highest prize,
And all its dearest good denies ;
We cavil at our earthly lot,
And living with angels, know them not.

EXPECTANCY.

TIME that moves with laggard wing
Flies fast enough for me;
For speeding moments swiftly bring
Their nearer fate to me.

Wretches that high on scaffold stand,
Mark not the surging crowd,
That press, like waves upon the strand,
With murmurs hoarse and loud.

They see nor hear the wildering strife,—
Only the sands that run;
Wild with despair they cling to life,
And hope where hope is none.

O Life! how short thy lasting here;
How faint thy footsteps fall!
A womb, breath, life; then comes a bier,
And white death swallows all.

I sit and watch the shadowy fate,
That, like some subtle foe,
Lurks in an ambush black as hate,
And waits to strike the blow;

And fear and doubt follow my heart,—
Expectancy of woe;

For when, and where, and how, the dart,
I would, yet cannot know.

Let me not linger 'yond my life,
With breath outlasting wind ;
My heart with bitter memories rife,
Broken, yet still confined.

Come as the lightning or the blast,
And strike me in my prime ;
Fear fights not him who knows the past,
And shudders not at time.

TO E. C.

On hearing her recitation after music.

SOAR, song, aloft !
So each vibrating tone
In billowy accent swells ;
Then sinks in cadence soft,
Until the sad notes moan,—
Seeking where echo dwells,
To die amid her cells.

Yet when thy words,
In utterance sweet and low,
Subdued the charmèd air,
Like song of early birds,—
Faded the music's glow ;
Broken the magic there,
Before a spell more rare.

For voice and thought
Lent each to each so much ;
So true each artless tone,
That nature's self seemed nought
Compared with thy sweet touch ;
And heart and soul both own,
Thou'rt music's self alone.

AN ERRAND.

GO, lovely Rose !
To her who rules my heart ;
Tell her of all its smart,—
How its wild longings and its pain
Survive, altho' the quest be vain ;
And tell her, too,—tho' this she knows,—
From how small hope my passion grows ;
That all my love and life
Are pledged to this dear strife
Until their close :
Tell this, fair Rose !

And tell her, Sweet !
Should she be haughty, proud ;
Should anger, like a cloud,
Darken her lovely eyes,
While she my suit denies,—
That high in heaven, thro' darker skies
Shine clearer, brighter, tenderer eyes ;
Eyes that ne'er check my love,
But answer from above,

And show how sweet
Should lovers greet.

And you may say,
I hug my golden chain ;
Captive tho' I remain,
She cannot hide her from my love,
Nor quench its flame, nor it remove.
I'll follow her throughout the land,
Proffer her love with heart and hand ;
I'll woo by day and dream by night,
And keep her ever in my sight,
Until some day
I'll have my way.

But while, dear Rose,
Gentle ambassador,
Thou dost for me implore,
If thou dost in her saint-like eyes
Mark sunny gleams of glad surprise,
Hear honeyed murmurs from her lips,
A trembling see in finger-tips,
Some gentle heavings of the breast,
Stirred by the force of sweet unrest,
Then tell the maid
But half I said.

A GREETING.

GO, Rose ! and give my love good-day ;
Bid her arise and come away ;
Bid her with haste appear
Unto her lover here,
Ere the hot firmament
Rifle the dews of tender morn,
And all its freshness, newly born,
In fiery day be blent.

Tell her day broadens at her gates ;
That balmy earth in silence waits,
Tip-toe with listening ear,
To catch her foot-falls dear.
In all their silent pulses, beat
The flushes that adorn
The roseate face of morn,
Her lovelier face to greet.

Tell her each bird that to the day
Warbles its fluttering notes alway,
Now sits the leaves among,
And holds its matin song
Awaiting her fair face.
All nature breathless is ;
So bid her with this kiss
Come stir the world with grace.

Then shalt thou nestle in her breast,
And, for reward, there take thy rest ;
Until when thou art dead—
Thy native perfume fled—
Thou shalt a subtler fragrance know,
Distilled from love's sweet pain,
Than earth can e'er attain,
Or chemic skill bestow.

I hear the lifting of a latch,
And as I bend the sound to catch,
I hear her rustling dress
Move with a soft caress,
And, lo ! she comes : move clouds, pipe birds !
Awake, O Earth, in beauty clad !
Sing all ye voices and be glad,
With eloquence more sweet than words !

What love, what joy, what kisses sweet,
When day begins and lovers meet !
For now my day 's in truth begun,
With this uprising of my Sun.
I glow and gladden 'neath her reign ;
I cry, fair day, fly not so fast ;
And when the morrow comes at last,
I bid my love good-day again.

THE LEAF.

IN dalliance sweet her fingers fine
Lay clasped within my own ;
Full of fond light her eyes did shine,
And looking softly into mine
There saw but love alone.

The golden hours out-ran my bliss,—
To perfect fulness grown ;
For who, in lingering clasp and kiss,
Their hurrying moments e'er could miss,
Until their sands were flown.

A glossy leaf from out her hair
A downward wafting bore ;
I seized it quick with jealous care,
And next my heart I vowed to wear
Love's favor evermore.

Alas ! the years have quickly sped,
Bitter and full of grief ;
The trust, the glow, the perfume fled,
Till all of hope and love, long dead,
Lies in a withered leaf.

And thou, so fragile and so poor,
Compared with love's great strength,
O leaf ! thou hast out-lasted more

Than all the griefs long years could pour
Into their troubled length.

And still out-lasting love, rest now,
Dead leaf, on my lone breast;
Stay, token sad of lover's vow,
Until we sink, both I and thou,
Into our final rest.

A SEA-FOG.

WE stood upon the gray sea sand,
Nor marked the tumbling breakers' path,
Though fierce and strong they lashed the land,
And ceaseless spent their strength in wrath.

For far beyond the white cap's flash,
And swirling in the hungry sea,
A laboring bark did madly dash,
With naught save hell upon her lea.

And there far out upon the main,
There, where the wild waves fiercest roll,
Now lost to view, then seen again,
We saw a wreck beyond control.

O hearts whose frighted pulses leap!
O eyes that watch through blinding spray!
In helpless terror ye shall weep,
And mourn a fate ye cannot stay.

A white fog, like an unshrived ghost,
With garments trailing o'er the sea,
Fell like a wreath on wave and coast,
And shrouded all in mystery.

We heard the surf we could not see,
Come trampling up the level sand ;
And nearer still, a wild bird's glee
Waked all the echoes of the land.

We heard upon the startled air
A signal-gun come booming down ;
The one last cry from black despair,
Of souls that sink, and sink to drown.

Heard we a shriek ? Ah, no ! on land
Only the small bird whistled shrill ;
The yeasty waves still beat the strand ;
The world, all else, lay white and still.

At last, the mocking sun o'erhead
Rent like a veil the ashen mist,
And, ere the cloud, dissolving, fled,
Shone down, and all the waters kissed.

The surf still broke with sullen roar ;
The white caps flashed and tumbled free ;
But mortal eyes from sea or shore
Shall never more that doomed ship see.

WHAT IS LIFE?

WHAT is Life? Ah, me!
It passeth speedily;
Falling, falling, like a falling star;
A meteor bright, whose short-lived flame
Scarce hints the source from whence it came;
Hastening with a swift unrest,
Yet lingering like some banished guest,
Who turns and gazes from afar.

Ah! never more shall time
Renew its golden prime:
Fading, fading, like a fading flower,
It blooms and glows a transient day,
Then burns its crimson heart away;
Ordained to ruin from its birth,
It dies and falls to mother earth,
And straight forgets its vanished hour.

Shall there not come a time
In some remoter clime,
When all the love and bloom and zest,
That lent aroma to the feast,
Shall live again from earth released,
And love and life immortal glow?
O Fate! if this may not be so,
Grant me at least eternal rest.

LIFE'S LOST BLOOM.

FOREVER gone is Life's fresh bloom,
Its love and light are shaded ;
Its flying joys to grief give room,
And all its charms are faded.

O flushing hours ! whose wreathèd chain
Exhaled your balmy treasure,
Can ye bring back young joys again,
Unstinted in their measure ?

The leafless tree shall bloom anew,
Again be decked with flowers,
Again with magic sweets renew
The fragrance of its bowers.

The constant day shall follow night ;
Through tears shall smile its dawning ;
And heaven's high bow shall gleam more bright,
For nature's fair adorning.

But hearts that suffering beat and burn,
To them fresh griefs come ever ;
Their vanished joys can ne'er return,
They're gone, and gone forever.

REGRET.

O LOVE ! the wasted days are o'er ;
I joy and yet repine ;
Their truant hours I but deplore,
Because not wholly thine.

All their computing moments score
A sum augmenting fast ;
With nimble count, still adding more
Transgressions to the past.

The one, who of himself doth smart,
Can mitigate his pain ;
But he that wounds a fellow heart,
May seek relief in vain.

For cold neglect can strike a blow
That's neither slight nor brief ;
And love, that hides the tears which flow,
Lends bitterness to grief.

The past is gone ; 'tis ours no more ;
Nor be its memory thine ;
For this brisk hour is running o'er
With life and love divine.

Before its hurrying moments fly,
There's time for me to sue ;—
To taste forgiveness ere they die,
And all my vows renew.

Then scan not, sweet ! the squandered past,
  Love's vows to comprehend ;
For while my flying hours do last,
  They're thine unto the end.

LOVE AND WRATH.

I DO not love thee !
  And yet I do.
Sometimes, when from thine eyes,
Quick angry lightning flies,
And all thy splendor proud
Flames from the gathering cloud,
I catch thy passioned rage,
Yet cannot disengage
My heart, or thee assuage :
And then I love thee not ;
And yet I do.

I do not love thee !
And yet I do.
For like a moth that flies
Where quick destruction lies,
I seek thy lovely wrath ;
And in the lightning's path,
Blinded and dazed, I wait
To court a fickle fate
That changes with each state :
And then I love thee not ;
And yet I do.

I do not love thee !
And yet I do.
For when from angel eyes
The bows of promise rise,
And love's own sunbeams shine
From out thy face divine,
Beaming on me with radiance sweet,
Till hope and its fulfilment meet,
I worship at thy tender feet :
And then I love thee ;
Ah ! yes, I do.

SONNET.

SHALL I have comfort in this fair spring day,
Which, with its fruitful love doth kiss glad earth,
And fills her womb with fairest flowers of May,
Till she with winking fulness hails their birth ?
Ah, love ! my heart doth beat with eager pace,
And all its pulses, tingling in their flow,
Move swift to greet the glory of thy face,
To catch the breathing kiss which lovers know.
Come, then ! and breathe on me heart-filling balm ;
With answering glance reward my serving eye ;
With all thy graces make my spring-time warm,
That I no more on chilly couch may lie.
Then shall thy favors be like fair buds thrown,
And I shall bloom and live for thee alone.

SONNET.

I AM thy very slave : thy word is law
That doth compel my instant servitude.
My hungry heart no longer wages war,
And now disdains its late imperious mood.
Thou hast so tamed it to thy slightest beck,
That it, unchiding, waits upon thy will,
And even with sufferance bears thy check.
Yet my great love doth raise me toward thee still,
The while it ever doth exalt thee higher,
Till thou dost stand transfigured on a throne,
Where meaner love may never dare aspire.
Stoop, Queen of Love ! make me so much thine own,
By free requital of thy bounteous store,
That we may equal reign forevermore.

SONNET.

WHEN in the dewy morning I arise,
And hear blithe music wake in every bower,
Till nature's self doth revel in the shower
Of rainèd sweetness pouring through the skies,—
I would that with such music I could greet
Thy fair uprising, and so show my love,
That each enraptured bird should join above,
And sing in unison thy praises sweet.
But, ah ! I cannot voice the half of bliss ;
And sometimes check the tongue that fain would praise,
Lest its weak utterance should seem amiss,
And wrong in song one worthy nobler lays.
For strongest love most often silent is,
And mutely thrills through all its hidden ways.

SONNET.

WHEN from the poet's precinct fancy flies—
Tired of false images and love's caprice,—
From vain conceits he, wearied, seeks release,
And rhymes no longer to some feigned one's eyes
But turns in purer thought to one whose worth
Is greater than her beauty's outward show ;
Though highest honor tongues to beauty owe,
Is but her honest meed and simple truth.
I who know best could sing thy praises best,
Did not thy shrinking thought so shun all praise ;
I who have lain within thy tender breast,
And read thy unstained soul with rapt amaze,—
I know thy grace is seen, thy worth but guessed,
And in this faith I worship all my days.

SONNET.

HAD I but seen thee in my greener prime,
When all the freshness of young life was mine,
Then had I writ to thee a song divine,
And made thee famous by my love through time.
And now when years have rounded all my days,
And with civility my ardor tamed,
I think, could I with thee in song be named,
Thy worth would still immortalize my lays.
But when I strive thy lovely grace to sing,
And look from my low place to thine above,
I fail for want of angel's plumy wing,
And seraph's fire my glowing song to move.
So, thus abased, I meaner tribute bring,
And with weak words still supplicate thy love.

SONNET.

COULD I but venture where the amaranths blow—
Those never-fading flowers,—and with them twine
The modest violet and the eglantine,
And the white asphodel as pure as snow,
I'd wreath a charm to match thy tender grace,
A fitting crown to top thy queenly head ;
And with such balms as once o'er Eden spread,
Waft the sweet messenger to thee apace.
But, ah ! dear Friend, why offer thee earth's flowers,
When Heaven's own garlands bloom within thy heart,
Breathe from thy lips, and vivify the hours ?
Then let thy grace bestow on me a humble part,
And when the west wind blows with odorous wings,
My heart shall leap to greet the gift it brings.

SONNET.

THE curious eye may watch her lovely face,
Whereon such rare and roseate tinctures glow,
And cry, " How fair the rose and lily show
'Mid all the glories of a maiden grace."
If this sweet show, this bloom, and tender glance,
Would so attract a stranger's unskilled eyes,
Until he sees the light of Paradise
Dawn in the garden of that countenance ;
I, to whom love hath given finer powers,
See there the emblems of a flowering soul
That hath its root in other world than ours,
And which doth ever seek its native goal,—
Meanwhile decks life with love and grace and flowers,
And in one beauteous garland binds the whole.

SONNET.

IF thou didst love me for imagined fame,
Or for some reason, bred within thy mind
By teeming fancy, till thy sense grew blind,
And wish, and its possession, seemed the same,—
Was it my fault that I was not endowed
With all the virtues of thy paragon ;—
That clearer light did shine my flaws upon,
And showed the actual presence free from cloud ?
Ah, no ! the fault, if blame there be, was thine.
If thou hadst loved me for my self alone,
Thy love had lent its graces unto mine,
Until my frailties had to merits grown ;
Till light, reflected from thy soul divine,
Had so transfused me that I, too, had shone.

SONNET

WHEN I review the tablets of my brain,
And see what memory hath scored thereon,
I count upon my hand the victories won,
And weep to see how small the total gain.
My one poor talent hidden in the ground,
Gains little interest, and hath naught to lend ;
The small no larger grown, may ne'er amend,
Nor e'er with growing time be better found.
Still should oblivion the record shame,
Dim charactered in graving dull and old,
Yet leave in bold relief thy treasured name,
Above all else inscribed in lasting gold ;
My heart would claim the scrip in lieu of fame,
More valuing friendship's worth than wealth untold.

SONNET.

DECEMBER 25, '76.

O THOU ! who from December's chilling day
And short-lived hours doth pluck some kindling heat,
And crown'st with living flowers the season fleet,
Till barren winter wears the bloom of May.
I would my touch could sweep a stronger lyre,
And wake some strain more fitting thy pure soul,
So that my love, all freed from earth's control,
Might sing thy worth with more than mortal fire.
But praise seems weak to one so near God's wing,
And the tongue falters while the full heart burns.
Thy deeds, of thy dear self so sweetly sing,
That the poor heart, inured to suffering, turns,
Hears the high song, and cries, " Dear God above,
How poor this earth would seem without her love ! "

TO H. L. H.

DECEMBER 27, '77.

AND art thou gone indeed? O friend most dear!
Sweet delegate from God to mortals here;
Mother of tenderness and charities;
Giver of goodly alms and gifts that please
The soul of Him who died on holy cross;
Sister in faith to all sad hearts in need,
And owning fellowship in all save creed;
Bestowing ever from thy bounteous store,
A love which knew no niggard stint nor loss,
But with large giving ever grew the more.

Daughter of filial faith and duty sweet;
Offspring of God, aye reverent at his feet,
Who owned as debt each suppliant's craving prayer,—
Paying the claim with such largess of love
And tender utterance, like gentle rain,
That the sad heart, forgetful of its pain,
Beseeched with tears the great All-Father there,
To shower upon thee blessings from above.

Our dearest love is dead! gone ere the year
Hath reeled the last of all his golden skeins,
And laid his spindle by. The few days due,
Never again shall breed a life so dear:

Shall never such companionship renew,
Nor find a balsam sweet to heal our pains.
Come with me, then, this holy Christmas-tide!
Come! ere the palsied year with tottering feet,
Sinks 'neath the insatiate archer's wand,
And clutching his sad robes 'mid frost and sleet,
Leaves us to join the unreturning band,
While gloom and grief with us alone abide;
Come while the lingering warmth still yields
Some trace of autumn on the breezy hill,
And in the wind-screened hollows and the fields,
Some sweet belated blossoms loiter still,
And gather sadly round her grassy tomb.
While her new birth the quiring angels sing,
We will but rest awhile, and fondly fling
A few pale buds upon her silent bed,
And softly mourn her loss ere day be fled.
Have ye not often seen her outstretched palm,
With noble giving dearer than the gift?
Ye, for whose griefs her eyes with feelings warm
Rained down their ready drops, weep now for her
Who wept in life for you; and gently stir
The air that silently invests her grave,—
For silent tribute best befits her worth.

Ye clinging vines that clasp the breast of earth!
And ye, O flowers, she loved so well! come now
And lay your pensile heads upon her breast;
Breathe over her as tenderly ye bow,
And drop ambrosial dews upon her rest.
O buds of soothing balm!
Ye may not match her bosom's tranquil calm;
She was twin flower with you; like you

Drank in earth's fragrant sunlight and the dew ;
And from each element took she its noblest part,
Incorporate with herself, until her heart,
Quick moving, beat at nature's every touch.
Ye, too, shall droop and die ; 'tis not too much
That ere ye go, ye for a moment weep
Your odorous tears upon your sister here,
Whose soul immortal, tho' her body sleep,
Shall live forever fragrant. Pause ye here,
O journeying winds that from the west
Waft whispering lullabies ! brush the low grass
Above her mound, and murmur peace and rest.
Shed down, O Heaven ! your pitiful soft rain ;
Keep the sweet herbage green—each root and blade ;
And of thy gracious bounties give the best.
Let the low light of dying evening pass,
And gild her passage to eternal day ;
And the soft clouds that brooding float in shade
And light, hang over her ere twilight fade.

If any here whose hearts grim life hath soiled,
Kneel now with me and purge the guilty stain ;
Pray ye for her, who all her life hath toiled
And prayed for such as you—nor prayed in vain.
Then hence, away ; we may no longer bide
Nor weep ; a few short years shall smooth our grief.
And could her spirit, for a moment brief
Become our visitant, methinks 'twould chide
Our longer grieving. Weep, dear friends, no more ;
For she for whom we make our earthly plaint,
Walks now in bliss and joy, star-crowned, a saint.

She hath been with us long, and long hath beamed
Upon us like a clear celestial light,—
So constant with us that we scarcely dreamed
How high her place, how pure, how heavenly bright ;
For ye do know, she was a peerless star,
Fitted to shine 'mid constellations bright :
But now,—her mortal task being ended quite,—
From us, contented, hath she passed afar,
And like a gliding star, from her high seat,
Hath slid serenely thro' the aisles of night
Into the outstretched arms and waiting breast of God.

SONNET.

LO ! while I write, another year, dear friend,
With rolling swiftness brings thy natal day,
And festal warmth subduing winter's sway,
And joys wherein both past and present blend.
Day calleth unto day ; no foolish tears
Shall stain their flight ; more beauteous seems the road
Wherein our willing feet so long have trod,—
Made bright by love, and sanctified by years.
Oh ! large of heart and generous of hand,
May Heaven's blessing on thy life descend ;
Long live to grant thy love to love's demand,
And be, when shadows indicate the end,
Like watcher on the hill, who sees, I wis,
Gleams from an unknown world more bright than this.

SONNET.

SEE where art's wizard hath with magic key
Unlocked great nature's book, and boldly poured
Upon his canvas all her treasured hoard,
Long hid in sweet and solemn mystery.
We thank thee, limner,—yea, O crownèd king!
We brave with thee the wind-swept hill, the roar
Of tumbling breakers on thy rock-ribbed shore,
And the swift storm that beats with cloudy wing
The mountain's breast. Thy pictures thus unfold
The breathing glories of the teeming earth,—
Clothing with living light both sky and sod.
Thou art a master spirit who doth hold
The world in fee; and in thy honored worth,
Art one with nature and with nature's God.

SEMPER FIDELIS.

WHEN after years of absence, I did come
From baffled search of wealth and barren fields,
And with the sad results such venture yields,
Slow dragged my weary, doubting steps toward home ;
Poor and forgotten, sad beyond all word ;
Guilty with failure ; pride by shame o'erthrown,
And eyed askance by friends I once had known,
A wild swift welcome down the road I heard.
With eager whimperings, ears back thrown,
And joy ecstatic, came my dog in chase ;
And like a storm, with yelp and smothered moan,
He flew into my arms and kissed my face.
And I, so broken, where all love seemed flown,
Knelt down and wept with him in close embrace.

SONNET.

O GOD ! when I do think of what I am,—
Of all the barren years so swiftly flown,
Unfruitful of the good so scantly sown,
I wonder that my soul can have such calm,—
Such still tranquillity amid the strife
That rages round me, till I seem a leaf,
Blown by the bitter blast and whirled to grief,—
An atom in immensity of life ;
And cry, O Thou, who knowest my weariness ;
How the strange world from me is far removed ;
How great my suffering and how scant my bliss ;
How what an utter failure life hath proved ;
How joys once whole have crumbled, — blessings passed ;—
Take me, dear Lord ! unto Thy breast at last !

IMPROMPTU.

LOVE me while yet 'tis day ;
Love me ere fades away
The red light in the sky !
Love that is born of night
Dies in the morning light ;
Or if it burns
In its spent urns,
'Tis but a flickering spark
That needs the dark,
Ere it can shine in lover's eye.
But love that through the day
Doth hold its steady sway,
Is like the vestal flame,
Always the same ;
Nor can the dews of morn
Quench it to scorn.
So love me through the day,
And I will say
Thou canst no more,
But giveth all thy store.
In thy abandonment
I find so deep content,
That such another bliss
Not in this wide world is.
Then nights may come and go,
If that each day bestow
A wealth of life and love,
All earthly prize above ;
Such as all mortals crave,
And few but angels have.

OVER THE WAVE.

OVER the wave
My love hath gone ;
Over the wild sea-wave she went ;
Hope with my sorrow sweetly blent,
Yet sorrow most
My heart engrossed,
And night and day I cried in vain,
O absent one, return again !

Over the wave
The ships sail on,
But never a keel that ploughs the sea
Can bear a message of love from me ;
Nor favoring gale
That swells the sail,
Can waft one word from over the sea,
Or ever bring back my love to me.

Over the wave
The bird flies free ;
Though swiftly he speed his northern flight,
From the realms of song and love's delight,
Though sure his wing,
He cannot bring
Any news of her so dear to me,—
Of my darling one across the sea.

Over the wave
The wild winds moan ;
The sea that rolls makes many a wrack ;
The ship that sailed shall never come back ;
And the grief in my heart
Shall never depart,
For she that went out across the sea
Shall never, never, come back to me.

TWIN HEARTS.

TWO hearts which ran so close
That one thought covered both ;
Two hearts from whence arose
An everlasting troth.
Two hearts so linked to each,
Love seemed no more a chain ;
Fetters grief might not reach,
Such rose-leaves covered pain.
A few pale rose-leaves dead,—
A fragrance scarce perceived ;
A chamber filled with dread,
An aching heart bereaved.
Two hearts bowed low with grief
Seem in my lonely breast ;
Two lives so bright and brief,
More sad than one at rest.

ECHO.

O NYMPH unseen, who dost abide
By the steep mountain side ;
Or in some secret dell,
Tunest thy magic shell ;
And answerest still from wood or rock
With thy deceiving mock ;—
Where art thou hid ;
What flowers or woods amid ?
The shepherd's song
Thou dost prolong ;
And the sad swain, who in the grove,
Loudly laments his truant love,
Hears thy delusive strain,
And seeks in vain
For her he thinks concealed
In this or yonder field ;
And oft deceivèd, cries amain,
" Guide with thy voice again ! "
O thou ! that in my love's spring-tide
Didst tenderly with me abide ;
Who all my fond distractions knew,
And gav'st them back as purely true,
That to my heart seemed given
A double blessing straight from heaven ;
Who in my later years,
Clouded with loss and tears,
Hast soothed my tender pain
With thy refrain :

O nymph ! so faithful and so fair,
Who love for sweet Narcissus bare ;
And dying of thy wound,
Still liv'st in sound,
Hear me, and grant my prayer !
The one who walked with me,—
Give back her minstrelsy ;
That voice long dead
Breathe overhead ;
Fill all the ambient sky
With her sweet melody,
And star the heavens with her fresh words,
Sweeter than song of birds ;
Sound from thy airy shell,
The voice I loved so well :
This do for me,
And thou shalt be
My dear divinity ;
And I will linger still
Where grows the daffodil,
Fast by the margin of some silver stream ;
There lie and dream,
While every sylvan god
That ever woodland trod,
Shall deck thy haunts with sweetest flowers,
And water them with balmiest showers ;
And all the spheres,
With listening ears,
Shall hear and answer all—
Each swell and dying fall ;
And thou shalt be
Ever with them, though still with me.

TO BESSIE.

ALL things that joyous be
In peaceful gayety ;
All buds that 'neath the sky
Greet the approving eye ;
Fair flowers of every hue
Born in the morning new ;
All airs that breathe of balm,
And full thoughts born of calm ;
All sweets the sun matures,
And love that long endures ;
Whatever is of good
In purest womanhood,
Throng round my darling Bess,
And bring her happiness.
She born of love and light,
Tuned to the heart's delight,
May lend you all you need,
Yet claim your highest meed.
Nature and wisdom hold
Her in alternate fold ;
And through her artless ways,
Such charm contagious plays,
That in its fetters all
Are bound in willing thrall ;
And I, too, vanquished, own
My heart is hers alone.
Oh ! gentle powers that move

All thoughts to sacred love,
Attend this lovely maid,
Nor let your influence fade ;
Give her that sweet simplicity
Born of unconscious purity ;
Let the clear fires that burn within,
In all her outward life be seen ;
Let the free sense of liberty,
In all her dancing motions be,
An ornament for life's delight ;
A lovely radiance as bright
As stars that shine in dusky night ;
A spirit bright and just and good,
Fitted for love's perpetual food ;
A thoughtful, tender, loving mind,
Where all life's graces are enshrined ;
Phantom of heaven, yet mortal too,
Which men may worship and yet woo ;
A playful half-constrainèd eye
That holds me in captivity ;
A sportive, rapid sidelong glance,
That checks while it expects advance ;
A mantling glow on either cheek,
That utters signs words may not speak ;
A mouth with pearls of double row,
That gleam when Cupid's coral bow
With rippling laughter shoots amain
The arrows winged with love's sweet pain ;
The wanton order of her hair
Whose silken tangles are love's snare ;
The flowing 'kerchief flying free,
That flouts yet beckons unto me ;
The fine white hand whose fingers play,

And sweetly touch yet will not stay ;
The arm that glows upon the air,
Till I grow faint in gazing there ;
The yielding robe that panting flows,
When each attendant zephyr shows
Such sweet suggestions of her form
That all the tingling pulses warm ;
The mystery of love expressed,
Whether in motion or at rest.
The separate witchment of each part
Bewilders me with magic art ;
Yet when combined, I, frantic grown,
In such confused distraction thrown,
Filled with love's tumult wild and sweet ;
Fall down and worship at her feet.

TWO MIRRORS.

MY love but breathed upon the glass,
And, lo, upon the crystal sheen
A tender mist did straightway pass,
And raised its jealous veil between.

But quick, as when Aurora's face
Is hid behind some transient shroud,
The sun strikes through with golden grace,
And she emerges from the cloud ;

So, from her eyes, celestial light
Shines on the mirror's cloudy plain,

And swift the envious mist takes flight,
  And shows her lovely face again.

When o'er the mirror of my heart,
  Wherein her image true endures
Some misty doubt doth sudden start,
  And all the sweet reflex obscures ;

There beams such glow from her clear eyes,
  That swift the rising mists are laid ;
And fixed, again, her image lies,
  All lovelier for the passing shade.

LOVE AND DEATH.

I GRASPED the moss rose ;
  But the thorn on its spray
Pierced sore my white fingers,
  And held me at bay.

I plucked the moss rose ;
  But its balsamic breath
Exhaled from my fingers
  The odor of death.

From my love's full lips
  I inhaled the sweet breath ;
I gave him my true love,—
  But, ah ! it was death.

Round life's empty shrine
  Though I twine me a wreath,

It climbs without blooming,
And living, is death.

Since death is in life,
And love dies with its breath,
I leave thee, O false one!
Oh! falser than death.

THE WITHERED ROSE.

I SAID: O love! this tender flower,
This blush rose plucked from bloomy spray,
Breathes sweeter in this twilight hour,
Than in the heat and glare of day.

Take it, for all the grace of earth,
The scent and hue that make it sweet,
Are but faint emblems of thy worth,
And fain would worship at thy feet.

She took the rose—the queen's fair crown,—
But swift, as when through steel-gray skies,
The glimmering frost comes sifting down,
And smites the bower where beauty lies,

It fell, as touched with baleful wand:
Speechless she marked the petals fleet;
A withered stem within her hand,
And stricken rose-leaves at her feet.

A strange wan light was in her eye,—
A light which in that twilight grove,

Where glow and gloom commingled lie,
One scarce might tell if hate or love.

Yet when on me she turned that gaze,
Smitten with blight and untold grief,
I read my fate within her face,
And in the blossom's withered leaf.

SONG.

SING me no more of bloody strife,
The fierce offence that cries to Heaven ;
Sing not of pain or grief-full life,
Nor all the woes to mankind given.

Sing not of wealth, nor yet of fame,
Of wild ambition's vain desire,
Of eager souls who seek a name
And sell their peace for golden hire.

Song should breathe ambrosial breath,
A sacred hymn out-pouring joy,
Soaring while singing, crowned with wreath,
Immortal and without annoy.

Song should renew the pulse of age,
And fire the bounding blood of youth ;
Should cast a glow o'er memory's page,
And kindle love and hope and truth.

Song should sing in tender tone,
Of patient faith and hope's fond trust;
Joys ever present though long flown,
Perennial rising from their dust.

Yet when I search my beating breast,
Thou soul of song! for themes above
All these and fitter than the rest,
I nothing find save thee and love.

SONG.

SING me a song, love!
Sing me a song at even;
One not too much the earth above,
And yet akin to heaven;
Whose notes, howe'er they roam,
Still cling to home.

Some unpremeditated strain
That bids the heart rejoice;
Born of a poet's brain,
Made glorious by thy voice;
Fit for a saint and lover too,
And like to love, forever new.

Something thy lips have caught
From passion's trembling lyre;
With tender sadness fraught,
Mixed with a sweet desire,
Until thy kindling heart
Doth all its fire impart.

Then cease, and let the strain
In twilight's silence die.
Ah ! not for me 'twas sung in vain,
For in my breast its echoes lie,
And all my soul to rapture grown,
Claims thy dear song and self my own.

LOVE'S COMING.

TELL me where can love be found ?
I have sought the world around.
Is it invented in the brain ;
Is it discovered by the eye ;
Can mortal yearnings it attain,
Or e'er its hidden source descry ;
Can things concealed
E'er be revealed ?

Where, oh ! where can love be found ?
Does it lurk within the ground ;
Is it seen within the sky,
Where bright splendors flush and fade ;
Does it live the bowers anigh,
Where spring roses bloom in shade ;
Is it given
From earth or heaven ?

I that weep and dream in bliss ;
I that hunger for love's kiss ;
I that feel the stinging pain,
Nor know from whence the fatal wound ;

Fain would I the knowledge gain,
And all its secret mysteries sound.
Ah ! tell me, love,
Whence cometh love ?

It is born within the heart ;
It is bred in every part ;
It's begotten in the mind ;
Fostered is in every thought,
Spontaneous, sure, though blind ;
Coming swift though never sought ;
It is here and there,
And everywhere.

Like the wind that murmurs sweet,
Like the stream whose wavelets beat,
Like the birds on every tree
Singing to the early morn,
So, unthought of, comes to me
All its rapture newly born ;
Nor do I care
From whence or where.

MEDUSA.

I AM Medusa ! pause, nor see
Where on the gale my serpent locks
Flame-eyed blaze with bickering mocks ;
Mark not their glittering coils, but flee !
Swift from my terrors turn aside ;
Away ! 'tis madness to abide.

I am Medusa ! and I wreathe
My tangled hair with darting flame,
Whose shifting fires no power can tame,
So fiercely do they burn and seethe.
Think not my brows they harmless deck,
Like iris on the ring-dove's neck.

I am Medusa ! see ! the ground
I stamp with warning heel, and lo,
What fateful murmurs to and fro,
Through all the wide expanse resound !
My basilisk eyes ye may not meet,
Or fall and die beneath my feet.

I am Medusa ! I have fought
With all the bitterness of hate
Against my cursèd self—whose fate
Such cruel barrier hath wrought,—
And striven in vain against the brand
That burns and must forever stand.

I am Medusa ! fly, O fly !
Fain would I suck thy honeyed breath,
And kiss thy lips to stony death ;
Fain would I snare thy wandering eye,
Fold in my breath thy beauty bright,
Could I with thee but sink in night.

I am Medusa ! O my love !
I am heart-sick for thy dear sake ;
My passions strain as they would break,
And all my thoughts to madness move ;
My heart bursts trembling from my tongue,
Yearning with love, with anguish wrung.

I am Medusa ! come not near !
My kiss is the salute of death,
Who seeks, beloved one, thy breath.
He lives in me :—say, dost thou hear ?
He smites thee with my eyes and face,
And lures thee with my fatal grace.

I am Medusa ! yet my heart,
Grown nobler as it yields to fate,
Shall triumph over death and hate.
See ! I have veiled my face ; depart !
Kiss, and so leave me ; Oh, most sweet !
A heart lies broken at thy feet.

MINE.

SHE loves me with her heavenly eyes,
That soft through envious lashes beam—
Lovelier than hues in far-off skies,
When through transparent mists they gleam,—
And courts my meaner glance.
Shine forth, sweet eyes, with living light ;
Make warm the pale investing air ;
Make the dim earth more glad and bright,
And nature's fairest self more fair,
With your pure radiance.

For me, the roseate dawn of love
Breaks through the twilight of her face ;
And brings, whene'er its flushes move,
A day-spring filled with smiles and grace,
In which I pleasure take.
Her lips,—Ah me ! they clip the air
With such a wondrous tender wound,
That each fond zephyr murmuring there
Exhales its wanton breath in sound,
And dies for love's sweet sake.

And when from out their coral gate
Her lovely laughter rippling flows ;
The very birds their songs abate,
To catch such music ere it goes,
And use it for their speech.

Never did winds through fragrant pines,
Nor summer breezes wooing flowers,—
When all that fairest is combines,
Of fresh and sweet to charm the hours,—
To such perfection reach.

She wreathes for me her golden hair,
That takes its glory from the sun ;
Whether unloosed or meshed with care,
Their light and shade commingled run,
And blend in dazzling show.
Her hand she holdeth out to me,—
White, taper, strong, yet soft in mine
It rests in love's sincerity ;
And ever thus our fingers twine
As in locked hands we go.

A week, a month, an age of years,
Cannot suffice to count her charms ;
Larger each day their sum appears
Which only can with saint's white palms
Computed be and shown.
I only know that I am hers
Bound fast in love's eternal link,
With bliss so fixed that naught me stirs,
Save that I tremble when I think
That she is mine alone.

TO MRS. S.

A ROSE-LEAF fluttering on the wind,
A fragrant petal wafting by,
A gauzy wreath of silver cloud,
Threading with light the azure sky.

O Earth ! so fair and full of grace,
Throbbing with fresh and sweet delight,
How transient all your glories are ;
How short their time, how quick their flight.

Yet memory keeps them ever green,
Ever renews their lovely prime,
And holds them fast in tender trust
Beyond the wasting hand of time.

So the bright glance of friendship's eye,
The glowing touch, the loving word,
The sweet accord of trusting hearts
When all their noblest pulse is stirred,

Shall live when all their light is fled,
When silence broods upon the air,
When hand shall meet no answering hand,
And hearts shall droop in grief's despair.

So, friend of old, yet newly found,
O woman fair, yet good as fair,
I keep and hold thy tender grace,
And place it where my treasures are.

And while my heart allegiance holds
To ties which life can only end,
I lay my homage at thy feet,
My highest wish to call thee friend.

LOVE'S MEMORIAL.

HOW many years can I go back?
Ah, me! I may not tell;
For there are those who reverence lack,
Would say: "I know him well;
He hath outlasted love,
And hath no fire to prove
The flame that masters youth,—
The strength that makes it truth."

'Tis true! but yet from memory's page
I draw my deepest bliss:
If love hath dimmed in growing age,
And I no longer kiss,
I still retain the thought—
The sentiment unsought—
The fragrance of past time,
Untold in song or rhyme.

When longing hearts cry out: "O years!
Pour out your lavish store;
Bring in fond hope, and banish fears,
And feed love evermore";—
I say: "O years and days!
Throughout your fickle maze,

To me was ever given
A love but short of heaven."

While others seek their dearest needs,
My gift is still secure ;
For what youth gave, age holds, and feeds
Thereon while thoughts endure.
I have what others miss,—
The memory of bliss,
Its joy without unrest ;
And having it, am blest,

LURES.

COULD I believe thy gracious air,
Thy ways so sweet and debonnaire,
Thy looks that move
The world to love,
Were meant for me, and loyal too,
I'd pledge my honest faith to you.

But when I catch thy roving glance
O'ershooting me, as 'twere by chance ;
And in its fall
Including all,
I steel my heart, and shun the grace,
The mockery of thy fickle face.

The kisses wafted from thy hand,
Free as the breath o'er ocean fanned,
Prove not to me
Love's courtesy.

What all may gain I do not crave,
And unsought favors will not have.

If false, thy lures and roving glance
Will ne'er my halting heart advance ;
Kisses to me
My own must be ;
And if not so, I hold me free ;—
Lord of myself, if not of thee.

WEEP AND LAMENT, FOND MAIDEN.

WEEP and lament, fond maiden !
Thy lover is no more ;
Tossed by the sea, sand-laden,
He lies upon the shore.

The hands once stretched to greet thee,
Now clenched and tangled lie ;
The eyes that danced to meet thee
Are vacant as the sky.

No wind shall waft his greeting,
No hall shall hear his feet ;
With him thou'lt have no meeting
Save in a winding-sheet.

Loose now thy hair's dark braiding,
Put off thy fair array ;
Thy bridal wreath droops fading,
Like him to die away.

O life and beauty ! colder
Than thy dead bridegroom there,
Wilt thou, too, wane and moulder
Beneath consuming care ?

Thou'lt kneel beside thy lover,
And wail thy sobbing prayer ;
Joy's day is brief—soon over,—
As soon as love's despair.

As brief as joy is sorrow,
Loud prayers but lightly rise ;
A new love comes to-morrow,
And grief forgotten dies.

LOVE'S SOVEREIGNTY.

IF on the altar of thy heart
I lay my pride, my love,
The sacrifice is scant indeed,
Nor half I wish to prove.

Through loving thee I raise myself
Somewhat more near to thee,
Fain would I keep thee aye above,
Exemplar still to be.

When thee with love-lit eyes I see
Superior on thy throne,
All meaner aims I thrust aside
And strive for thee alone.

If manly deed thy praise can win,
Or honest heart thy love ;
If speech attunèd to thy own
Thy secret thoughts may move,

I will be all myself can be,—
For thee could I be less ?
Thy captive glorying in his chains,
Bound fast in sweet duress.

Stoop in requital then, fair queen,
From thy high place to this ;
Lift me to thee so I may be
Partaker of thy bliss.

LOVE'S LAMENT.

STANDING upon her grave—my lost, my love,
Bewildered with swift-clouding tears and grief,
Wildly from earth I raise my eyes above,
And cry to heaven for pity and relief.

She who so late, in all the pride of health,
Lent buoyant grace to every moment fleet,
Now in her kindred dust, shorn of life's wealth,
Lies like a stone, insensate at my feet.

And thou, O sky ! that dost environ all,
And look'st with vacant eye on all below,
Seeing nor heeding, yet with shimmering pall
Cloaking in mockery our human woe ;

Why should I cry to thee, O empty air ?
My voice goes out in space ;—no echo faint,
Reverberating, answers to my prayer,
And sorrow's self grows weary with complaint.

I turn to earth,—the only friend I know ;
Mother of love and grief, low on thy breast
I lay my bruisèd heart, my veriest woe,
And sobbing cry to thee for peace and rest.

Alas ! for me no more is peace or love ;
I bear my burden restless and alone ;
Neither from earth below nor heaven above,
Comes back one answering word or soothing tone.

Ye who have loved and lost, nor ever found
Comfort for life's cold pain, death's agony,—
Whoe'er ye be that tread this sacred ground,
Pray for her soul, and oh ! too, pray for me.

A HEALTH.

YE ladies all, both great and small,
I drink to you this bowl,—
But most to she that loveth me,
And doth my heart control,
Till that my life, so full of strife,
Doth gayer grow through bliss,
And I forget each vain regret,
Nor fortune's favor miss.
Maids and women, take ye heed,
I love ye for her sake ;
None of *her* sex my mind can vex,
Add love, or from it take.

Sweet ! in this hour when love has power,
I pledge my heart to thee,
Than whom the sun a fairer one
Never shone down to see.
Breathe but a kiss thou wilt not miss
Here on the glass I take,
And women all divine I'll call
For thy dear only sake.
Maids and women take ye heed,
I love ye for her sake ;
None of *her* sex my mind can vex,
Add love, or from it take.

Then ladies all, both great and small,
I pledge ye fair and true :

May Heaven defend and blessings send,
That nothing ye may rue ;
And may ye find, each in your kind,
Some heart as true as mine,
To pledge ye all, both great and small,
And make your sex divine.
Maids and women take ye heed,
I love ye for her sake ;
None of *her* sex my mind can vex,
Add love, or from it take.

IMPROMPTU.

DEAR Love ! art worn and weary ;
Hast thou some dull pain,
Born of anxious doubt or fear,
Or strivings fierce and vain ?
Here upon my waiting breast
Come and rest.
My pulse thy pulse shall hold
To an even, soothing beat,
And my arms shall thee enfold
In their shielding, safe retreat.

Love like mine can master
Each rebellious mood ;
Strong as chains for evil,
Stronger still for good.
On my breast
Lay thy weary head, and rest ;

Soft thy bed shall be,—
Soft with love, and love for thee :
Ever waiting, loving, giving,
Sure such love is worth receiving.

UNCONSCIOUS GIFTS.

I SEND thee flowers, sweet harbingers of spring !
What time the earth throws off her wintry hood,
And decks herself with greeneries, that bring
A resurrection to the heart,—a mood
Which welcomes beauty as a daily food,
And breathes its sighs upon each southern air,
As if the heart's vain earnest beatings could
Thrust out unbidden guests that riot there,
And stifle memories of aught that is not pure and fair.

O nature ! clad in garments brown and sere,
Mourning with misty grief thy glory's wane ;
Or in thy verdant prime, with aspect clear,
Health on thy brow, thy vesture without stain.
O ever gentle thou, sweet mother ! vain
Blind ingrates they who kneel at ruined fanes,
Nor own thy voluntary bounty gain ;
Who rob the heart to crown the brow with pains—
Ambition's thorny wreaths, that cease not till the life-blood drains.

Naught lives or dies, but some must love or mourn.
The wayside flower will lend long treasured charms

To the lone traveller weary and wayworn ;
The words of love, the kindly glance that warms,
May find their echo in some breast forlorn,
Waking within its gloom a beam of light,
And win a blessing sweet as summer's dawn.
So, unknown to thee, thy glances bright
Fell on my heart, like dew to flowers, ere falls the solemn night.

And I would thank thee, as I thank the earth,
For all the unconscious joy her beauty gives,
Rolls in her orb, invests her varied girth ;
And could my pen portray the grace which lives,
Catch but the spirit that within her breathes,
And write, with fearless hand, the words which burn
With inspiration,—like autumnal leaves,
I'd fling them down for thee ; then mightst thou learn
And share, perchance, the joy of him who gives, nor asks return.

I know thee not, fair one ! but yet I know
This day's wide privilege shall bear me free,
And sanction e'en these rhymes that rudely flow,
Nor half reveal the thoughts that fain would be
Released from unwished bonds and musing reverie,
To weave for thee a garland of sweet song,
Which might, perhaps, entwine one thought of me.
Then take the flowers my rhymes unwitting wrong,
But know the heart that gives them shall retain thy smiles full long.

SONG.

FRESHER than is the earth,
When in her beauty dressed,
Far sweeter than the birth
Of buds that on her rest,
Hinting, with odors faint, the time
And fulness of their perfect prime ;
Fresher and fairer, sweeter thou,
Than all the vernal earth can show.

Fairer than is the quiet sky,
Bound with her girdling galaxy,
When through the mazes of her hair
Gleams bright her golden nebula,
And all adown her twilight face
Flushes Aurora with pale grace.
Fairer and purer, holier thou,
Than sky above or earth below.

And so upon the flowery earth,
Where'er my footsteps wander forth,
I see thy graces as I rove,
And find in them fresh food for love ;
And in the great o'erarching sky,
Whose starry splendors greet my eye,
I see but signs of charms more bright,
More fixed and fitted for delight.

UNDYING CIRCLES.

I LAY outstretched on the green sward
That slopes to the grassy pool,
Till the sense that dallied with slumber,
With the golden scene was full.

Softly above, in the willows,
The winds swept by in their play,
And dappled with light and shadow
The path of their sea-ward way.

Soon, roused by a wayward fancy,
I strolled to the tiny strand,
And bending me down up-gathered
Smooth pebbles within my hand.

And high in the air I flung them
Far over the sparkling stream ;
They slid in their noiseless progress,
Like the silent lapse of a dream.

But soon, in speedy declension,
They fell from their curving flight,
And beneath the wave forever
Were buried from mortal sight.

Then circle on circle diverging
Waved out o'er the burnished plain,
Growing wider with each pulsation
Till the eye sought their centre in vain.

I could not help, as I pondered,
A feeling akin to regret,
As I marked how the sunken pebbles
Left their quivering traces yet.

My eyes sought out the brown shadows
That slept on the placid stream ;
But I knew that their sense roved inward
Through the mystic realms of dream.

And my heart, that slept like the waters,
Seemed swept by some spirit wind,
Till out from its hidden fountains
Rose the Naiad of the mind,—

Rose with gleaming arm uplifted,
With utterance soft and low,
And bore in her streaming fingers,
The stone that I cast below.

Oh ! thou thrower by the streamlet,
This stone is the human thought ;
And the deed is the hand that casteth,
With good or with evil fraught.

See then that the thought be loyal,
And the deed by conscience crowned ;
For there's never a force exerted
That powerless falls to ground.

There's never a thought flung from thee,
Far out into life's deep sea,
That shall sink with its own impulsion,
And forever cease to be.

For its influence travels forever,
Beyond mortal wish or ken ;
And in widening circles ever,
Goes out to the haunts of men.

LOST.

A THOUGHTLESS word, an idle sound
To him whose life rounds all the days
Into an easy, sweet content ;
Whose bounding pulse is ever rife
With healthful spirit, and whose bent
Is so benign that all heaven's winds
Breathe naught save wholesome influences,
To life so even, smooth, and calm,
Vast words have small significance.
Language, unwedded to the law
Of knowledge and experience,
Falls dead and powerless on the ear.
But to him who hath climbed the peak—
The one lone pinnacle of all
His hopes and dreams, towards which through years
Of struggle he has steadfast gone,—
And stands at last beside the prize,
Only to see it fall away,
Shiver like glass beneath his touch,
And pass forever from his sight,
Leaving him struck and stunned and blind,
And vainly wrestling with a woe
Whose might o'erpowers human strength ;

Then, with his shattered wealth beneath,
To gather up the beggar's bite,
The fragments of a blasted life,
And heartless, hopeless, journey on,—
It is a word no word can speak ;
A thought dimming the golden light,
Nature's high splendor ; bitter gall
To all his joyless waking hours,
And to the night a haunting care,
A presence that shall ne'er be laid.

Thus in the forges of our hearts
We beat and hammer each rude word,
Until it takes with mouldering force
The lasting shape of joy or woe,
And falls from sounding anvil's heat
Stamped with the image of a life.
And thus the busy world without,
Glows like an aura on the eye,
Or sweeps with trailing garments on,
As our own moods do prompt the sense.
For all things are not what they seem,
But only what the mind doth crave ;
Sound, form and color, light and shade,
Take all their nature from the teeming brain ;
And things *one* sees or hears, nor heeds,
Beat at the flood-gates of the heart
Of others ; and one poor small word
So grips and holds a human life,
That every pulse, and thought, and act,
Shape them to it, and cry, " Lost, lost ! "

TO H.

MY heart is prisoner to a woman,
But whether she's divine or human,
Although I've pondered oft and well,
I never yet could rightly tell.
Such grace is in her slender form,
Such buoyant ways her life adorn,
Such glory falls around her face,
Her golden locks seem all ablaze
With violet hues and amethyst ;
With saint-like halos, such as rain
Through the chancel's painted pane ;
Such moonlight hues as sweetly fell on
And waked the sleeping, rapt Endymion.
So much beauty, so much grace,
Such a witching tenderness,
Surely, cried I, could be born
In the realms of heaven alone.
'Tis true, O heart ! she is divine ;
Would heaven that she were mine !

But when my longings turn unto her,
And my heart would fain pursue her,
And my tongue with honeyed tone,
Fain would breathe to her alone,
Coining to words all dearest thought
Ever lover to his mistress brought ;
Straight, with a tone of mock surprise,
She flings at me such railleries,

And from her brown and dancing eyes,
Such wicked mischief hurtling flies,
Such sulks, and pouts, and flyings from me,
Such maddening lures and tricks upon me,
That frantic grown, so wildly vexed,
I quick forswear my former text,
And swear by all things wronged and human,
She is no saint, but purely woman,
She's not divine, she's not divine,
Thank heaven ! she never will be mine.

But, lo ! when most I strive to fly,
Coquettish glances backward fly,
And I, like moth whose wings are caught
Where the flame with death is fraught,
Unmindful of my former pain,
Fly to my torment once again.
Surely such pranks and mischiefs evil
Are begotten of the D—l.

Vain, O vain ! my fate I see,
And count it deep felicity.
My heart's so firmly fixed on her,
Naught from my suit can me deter ;
I'll laugh with her, give scorn for scorn,
Happy I, if she's forlorn.
Fling she quips, I'll do the same ;
Whate'er she plays, I'll meet the game,
And have her, if her love can be
Given to manly constancy.
I'll tire her out, and make her own
Love and indifference are one.

For be she woman, saint, or d—l,
I'll take the risk of good or evil.
Take courage, heart, nor hope resign ;
'Fore Heaven ! I swear she shall be mine.

THOUGHTS SUGGESTED BY THE DESTRUCTION OF THE ROTUNDA, BROADWAY AND CHAMBERS STREET.

HERE Art's creative fingers fondly wrought,
Arched the broad aisles, and raised the panelled wall ;
Flung her brave gallery round the airy court,
And set her seal, the soaring dome, o'er all.

O blessed Art ! that makes the earth her own,
And stamps it with the coinage of her brain ;
Hews with anointed hand the shapeless stone,
And blessing, bids it speak to living men.

Through rolling months her tireless labor wrought,
In patient faith, the master's noble plan ;
Up, stone by stone, the gleaming structure brought,
And crowned with deed the regal thought of man.

Look now ! where late beneath the softened light
The floor extended like a levelled plain,
A yawning chasm meets the shrinking sight,
That seeks, 'mid ruin, the old-time look in vain.

Where once proud fashion swept her silken train,
And beauty's form transfixed the wandering eye,

Usurping ruin strides in rude disdain,
And holds amid the wreck high revelry.

Down plank and beam ! upturned the spacious floor ;
Down arch and stately aisle, and panelled wall ;
The flying gallery ye shall see no more,
Nor the fair concave, towering over all.

Swart labor bared his brawny arm for nought,
And Art stands weeping, reft of pride and power,
To see the work by patience slowly wrought
Haste to destruction in a single hour.

States to their greatness rise by slow degrees,
Yet swiftly fall, till in decay they rest.
Autumn's full glory wanes amid her leaves,
And crownless dies on winter's barren breast !

Change, in its quick succession, follows change ;
'Tis memory alone endears the past.
Our yesterday has fled—to-day grows strange,
Ere sunset fades to purple twilight fast.

Yet from night's ashes soars the new day forth ;
From ruined states, lo ! nobler states arise ;
From winter's grave spring bounds with buoyant mirth,
And fresher beauties fill the radiant skies.

So from this wreck of time and patient toil
There shall arise a structure still more fair ;
Where use no longer dwells, there men despoil,
And Art, with busy hand, remodels all that's there,

From her bright throne with high intent descends,
Works with utility in compact true ;
Each grace and knowledge to the other lends,
And with fresh honors crown themselves anew.

The age of classic art has passed away,
Or dimly lives within her ruined fanes ;
An iron age succeeds with mastering sway,
Grasps the rich spoil, yet all of good retains.

That aim is best which meets the living time ;
And Art can never holier seem or be
Than when to noble needs she rears her shrine,
And shapes her work to fit humanity.

TO B——.

A double acrostic charade, consisting of two words.

WHIRLED through the darkness of the night,
The way-worn traveller flies ;
'Mid clank and shriek and flashing light,
In deep repose he lies.

Till when, above the infernal sounds,
A deafening shout is given,
He blindly wakes and swiftly bounds,
Like bolt from cross-bow driven.

Quick thro' the gloomy void he flew,—
Light landed on his feet,
And ere the train had sped from view,
He turned my FIRST to meet.

What horror burst upon his sight,
What rage inflamed his tongue,
Hid 'neath the kindly shades of night,
May not be said or sung.

But, see ! beneath the stars serene,
What dainty buds upfling
Their tender grace above the green,—
Sweet harbingers of spring.

With softened mien he silent drew
To where they waved and beckoned,—
Knelt fondly down amid the dew,
And plucked and kissed my SECOND.

Lo ! flashing lights illume the way,
Fair doors stand opened wide ;
The host, with outstretched arm, cries, Stay !
This night with me abide.

The men are brave, the women gay,
And dance and songs abound ;
And crowned with mirth and minstrelsy,
The wine goes circling round.

He saw the feast, the beaker's foam ;
The songs and mirth he heard ;
Come in, O weary traveller, come,
And share my glorious THIRD !

O bud so fragile, yet so strong !
He caught your pleading face,—
The purity that shamed the wrong,
And turned him from the place.

Dear bud of grace ! your strength impart,
  Your innocence and worth ;
Long mayst thou dwell within my heart,
  And save me from my FOURTH.

CHARADE.

SWIFT from the coach he lightly sprang,
  And swift across the street ;
His trembling hand the door-bell rang,
  In haste his love to greet.

O beating heart ! what sounds uprise,
  Louder than music's burst ?
'Tis but the Jehu's savage cries,—
  You have forgot my FIRST.

O wretch ! he cried, too mean to live,
  I would thy hours were reckoned !
My FIRST I then would gladly give,
  And feel 'twould prove my SECOND.

The wind blows fair, and heeling o'er,
  The good ship ploughs the main,
While severed hearts on ship and shore,
  Long weep, and weep in vain ;

And 'mid wild sob and choking sigh,
  Now reckless of control,
Pour forth in one despairing cry
  The anguish of my WHOLE.

THRENODY.

O HANDS with fingers fine !
Whose whiteness shamed the keys,
Along whose glittering line
They swept in ecstasies ;
Swept till the dead things caught the glowin
force,
With life inspired tumultuous rose and fell.
Like waves of song they chased your flyin
course,
With wilder music than the tongue can tell.
My ears, like sea-shells, still retain
The echoes of that wondrous strain.

O ! ye are whiter now,
And stiller than the mold
Which over form and brow
Presses with touch so cold.
Those tapering fingers never more shall start
In glowing radiance o'er the polished keys ;
They lie cross-folded o'er a pulseless heart,
Locked in the icy clasp no music frees ;
Gleaming through the blue mists of death,
Seeming to live without life's breath.

So lately glowing, strong,
So soft and fine withal ;
Cold hands, cold heart, cold song,
Ye rest beneath her pall.

And pale, unconscious, tranquil, too, ye rest
Upon the glimmering keys of memory,
And shifting not, keep ever in my breast,
The one refrain, whose life-long melody,
Whose murmuring cadence, tender tone,
Breathe but of thee,—of thee alone.

O tongue! that deftly slips
All thoughts to utterance bright;
O crimson-threaded lips!
Tuned to the soul's delight;
Coining such words with modulations fine,
That the rapt ear drinks in their magic spell,
And the heart throbs with ecstasy divine,
As o'er the quivering strings the accents swell;
O speechless, songless now, and gone
All save their memory alone.

Ye cannot now give back
The yearning words of love;
The sobs of grief that rack,
Shall never more thee move.
All cold and still, unconscious as a flower,
Thou tak'st the dews of woe; yet in mine ear
Dwelleth the echo of that word of power,—
That word excelling all the mind holds dear—
Fond lover's wish fulfilled by lover's breath;
O utterance vast! thou drownest even death.

O soul! that gave the song
And words their thrilling power,
All things to thee belong,
And thine their transient hour.

O sun of life! whose brightness touched and
turned
All things to strength and beauty; waked my life,—
Waked all the glow that ever in me burned,
And bade me stand with thee amid the strife,
Beneath the illimitable majesty
Of truth, and love, and hope and charity;—

Though thy fair temple lies
Within the halls of death
Untenanted, its ties
All sundered with its breath,
I had but lived in vain, could I believe
Its ruin had buried all my life had won,
Or adamantine gate could me bereave,
And shut me from the path which thou hast gone.
Its shades thrown o'er the dial of my way,
Mark but the hours that bid me still delay.

Though silvery tongue be dumb,
And hands grow still and cold;
Though nevermore shall come
The passion songs of old,
I have not lost thee all, for thou dost seem
Ever around me, cheering my lone heart.
Part of myself as I of thee, I deem
Each in the other hath immortal part.
O sacred love! from earth to heaven grown,
As I am thine, I claim thee for my own.

HE LOVES ME ;—HE LOVES ME NOT.

SHE stood amid the simple grass,
Where wild-briers held her lingering feet,
And all the hill in burnished mass,
Blazed out like one white marguerite.

Daisy or star, or marguerite,
Whichever name thou own'st on earth,—
Whene'er thy gleaming crown I greet,
Sad memories come and banish mirth.

Oft hath she stood at older feet,—
An eager child so long ago,—
And gayly pulled the marguerite,
And dancing waved it to and fro ;

Then slowly plucked each silvery leaf,
In foolish faith by youth begot,
And with alternate joy and grief
Shrilled out : " He loves me ;—loves me not."

And now, a stately maiden bright,—
Than any flower on earth more sweet,—
With love-lit gaze, like angel light,
She kneels and plucks the marguerite.

Again in child-like faith she cries :
He loves me not ; ah ! love grows sweet ;

See, see ! there the last petal flies,—
Dear Heaven ! he loves me, marguerite.

O years that come, and years that go,
With silent wingings sad and fleet,
How small your joy, how great your woe,
Since first she plucked the marguerite !

Once more she came 'neath darkened sky ;
The mocking daisies danced in glee :
Where now the love-light in her eye,
Where her love's sweet audacity ?

Irresolute and wan she stood,
With outlines drawn in sharpest grief :
For those sad moans, that sorrow's flood,
What balsam had this shining leaf ?

No more, she cried, such idle test ;
My loss is loss beyond all chance ;
Men may be false and yet find rest,
And women weep tho' marguerites dance.

Joy's petals from my heart are torn ;
I dare not palter with my lot ;
My golden crown lies bare and worn ;—
Ah, God in Heaven ! he loves me not.

I could not sleep where these flowers grow ;
Lay me in woodlands wild and sweet ;
There let the spring buds o'er me blow,
But never the false marguerite.

HER GRACES.

I HAVE seen more radiant streaks
Mantling on a maiden's cheeks,
A finer red on beauty's lips,
A pearlier tinge on finger tips,
A rarer mingling of such charms,
As stir the heart with sweet alarms.
Yet when I strive to find out where
All thy subtle graces are,
I say, imprimis :—a broad brow,
Whereon brown curls do cluster low,
Eyes of a shifting gray, whose hue
Grows dark by turns, or heavenly blue ;
Yet sometimes blaze with dangerous fire,
And quick the pulse with strange desire.
A nose nor long nor straight, yet will
In pertness domineer you still.
A mouth whose mirthful corners move
All eyes that gaze thereon, to love,
A chin, within whose dimples lay
The very bed where Cupids play.
But why proceed ? such details are
The stock of love's cheap auctioneer.
A glory haunts her slender frame.
A breathing presence without name,
A thrilling touch, a witching glance,
That courts, yet half repels advance ;
A saucy mouth that bids you go,

O'er which her laughing eyes wink, No !
A subtle lure that snares all sense,
Unmindful of the consequence.
Drum-beats that call the blood to arms ;—
Retreats that rash hope quick disarms.
O sweet enigma, modern sphinx !
Who of all sorceries binds the links ;—
First cause of love and love's duress ;
Thou riddle I may never guess,
Spare me !—distract with love's mad pain—
Nor smite, for I'm already slain.

TO LILLIE S——.

COULD I on this fair page but write
Something to make my memory dear,
Perchance a trifle gay and bright
That might some lonely moment cheer,

I would of roses, lilies, sing ;
Of maid distract within her bower ;
Or thoughts that fly on passion's wing
And stir the heart with love's sweet power.

But, ah ! my heart is quiet now,
Nor longer burns as in days past ;
Age plants his wrinkles on my brow,
And steals the bloom of life at last.

Yet still from out time's grasping hand
I pluck some buds of tender hue.

And wreathe them in a careless band,
Tho' all unmeet for such as you ;

And lay them humbly at thy feet,
O Lily fair ! of grace and worth ;
Nurtured in love and light,—more sweet
Than all the buds of mother earth.

Ah ! let them plead this suit of mine,
And all their subtle fragrance lend,
To keep within thy heart's pure shrine,
The memory of a lasting friend.

MEMORY.

COME swiftly from thy vanished days,
O memory !
Thou fragrance floating o'er the vase
Where all life's withered flowers are thrown ;
That like an incense born of fire
Doth animate the dead desire,
And mak'st the passioned past thy own,—
Come, come to me !

O thoughtful friend, whose tender grasp
Holds life in thrall ;
Thou whose far-reaching hand doth clasp
With saving hold the fading past,
Deflowering with a sweet address,
All of its life and loveliness,—

O leave me not while love doth last ;
Answer my call !

The days that dawned in dewy strength
Have set in gloom.
The time that knew nor space nor length
Hath dwindled to a narrow span ;
And love, and hope, and trust, and tears,
Lie mingled with its bitter years ;
For life, alas ! too soon out-ran
Its early bloom.

Thou, who dost make all blessings fond
Like leaves to rise,
Who driv'st them with enchanted wand,
And bid'st them sweep before my sight,
Till I live trembling in the past,
Fearing but hoping to the last,
Brooding in sad yet sweet delight,
'Mid tears and sighs.

I called thee from the vanished hours :
Come, sad-eyed friend !
Come ! as on breath of tenderest flowers ;
Grace, if thou canst, the weary day ;
Bring to my yearning heart, grief-tost,
Some of the treasure it hath lost ;
Life of my life ! to thee alway
My prayers ascend.

OUR FLAG.

AY ! let our boasted flag be furled !
The century passing by,
First flung its promise to the world,
The hope of liberty.

The unwritten law the patriot holds
Dearer than light from heaven,
Then sprang to life beneath its folds,
Life-giving and God-given.

Now, blazed with guilt, its tarnished bars
Display their gaudy shame ;
Disgrace is on its stripes and stars,—
A mockery its name.

A screen for every traitor hound,
A shield for every wrong,
A brazen canopy around
Dishonor's myriad throng.

The hireling knave that sells himself,—
The prostitute of state,
Who yields his lewdness up to pelf,
Indifferent to fate,

Beneath our sacred ægis stands,
Untouched in trust or name ;

Yea ! holds beneath its holy bands
Immunity from shame.

Our nation needs no 'broidered flag
To blazon forth its shame :
No screen of bannered pride to drag
In dust its honored name.

Then furl with tears its soil and stain,
And let it shrouded be,
Till time shall usher in again
God's law and liberty.

Till when shall come with holier hand
Some stronger hand to seize,
And fling once more o'er sea and land
The glory of the breeze.

Some swift evangel shod with flame,
Whose feet have walked near God,
Bearing from Sinai's mount, His name,
His law and chastening rod,

Shall come with hot, impetuous feet,
With flaming sword in hand,
Two-edged, to smite with vengeance fleet,
And purge the godless land.

Then shall he near the sacred shrine,
Where draped our standard lies,
Unloose its folds with love divine,
And give it to the skies.

Then right shall rule and truth prevail,
And hearts long sundered wide,
Once more a holy flag shall hail,
An honest nation's pride.

SONNET.

I HAVE been with you long, but now farewell !
Farewell, O world ! that sail'st thro' space and time ;
Farewell, O days ! that have out-stayed your prime,
Yet, lingering still, o'ershadow me, farewell !
Farewell the anxious care that each day brought ;
The dread and terror of the morrow's light :
The day's long wish for slowly-coming night ;
The evil hours with fear and sadness fraught.
Farewell the brutal blows of poverty,
That buffet us to where we first began ;
The heart whose love hath never gone from me,
The one sole love that made me reverence man.
Sweet love, farewell ! O life ! farewell to thee !
And welcome death with all thy terrors wan.

DIANA'S FEET.

WHEN toying zephyrs coax the hem
Of fair Diana's dress,
And hide-and-seek play in the folds
With fond and soft caress ;

The archèd glory of her feet
Breaks from the sheeny cloud ;
Then soft as thought is hid again
Within its snowy shroud.

But when some more presumptuous waft,
Grown bold with amorous play,
Waves high the convoluted folds,
And their full charms display ;

There breaks on the enraptured gaze,
More than the foot alone,—
Charms swelling upward to a grace,
Suggested more than shown.

Oh ! more than fair and rosy cheeks,
Oh ! more than gleaming eyes,
And more than graceful form and mien,
Within the fair foot lies.

The soul grows sick with gazing on 't ;
Love's dimness veils the eyes ;

The rising heart yearns wild with its
  Sweet possibilities.

Ah! who can solve the mystery
  That shrouds Diana's feet;
Their swift-entrancing witchery,
  With pregnant fancies sweet?

The charms that flaunt before the gaze,
  In all their fulness shown,
Leave nothing for the full-fed sense,
  That pines for bliss unknown.

A gauzy scarf, a creamy lawn,
  A hose with clock of gold,
That showeth half and hideth half,
  With mysteries manifold,

Doth more entrance me than the bliss
  Of promises fulfilled:
The hunt is better than the find,
  The chasen fox than killed.

Diana bared her tender feet,
  Whence radiant lines up-swelled;
I knelt and kissed—her willing slave,
  To servitude compelled.

SONNET.

HOW swift that fatal autumn day flew by!
Ushered with chilling gleams of light and haze,
Waning with speed from fiery noontide's blaze,
To its last splendor on the western sky.
Its hurrying hours were burthened with our fears;
The aching hearts that hushed their bitter strife,
Lest some wild pulse might rob that dearer life
Of its scant breath, and shorten his young years,
Grew desolate and still, like him who lay
Striving with yearning eyes to seek our own,
Until the closing of that autumn day.
And now, as then, though weary months have flown,
We pray, that from that night may come some ray
To us who lie within its darkness prone.

THE WAY.

WHEN after weary travelling through life's day
We reach with trembling feet the higher plain
Which in the distance seemed so hard to gain,
We backward look and scan our toilsome way ;
We mark the dangerous steep, the hidden snare,
The diverse roads that led us far astray,
The tempting toils that held us day by day,
Until we had no longer heart to dare,
And think, 'tis well ; we would not now retrace
The destined path our feet so lately trod.
We turn in trust our few scant years to face,
And meekly bend us to their chastening rod ;
Hoping, perchance, within them lies some grace,
Not our desert, to bring us nearer God.

LET FLOWERS PLEAD.

ROSES and lilies, go
Where heaves her breast of snow !
Violets, lurk within her eyes,
Where luminous shadow lies ;
Let the clover sweet
Breathe balm beneath her feet ;
On her lips sweet Daphne bloom,
And all her gentle breath perfume.

Let the eglantine
About her twine,
And in its odorous clasp so bind her,
That love, tho' blinded, still may find her ;
Let nature's cunning key
Unlock that breast to me ;
Perchance her subtle powers may gain
The love, my love hath sought in vain.

Stir, buds of balm,
Her bosom's calm,
Till all its passions, many-hued,
Be with your tender grace imbued ;
Till that a conscious grace
Shine on me from her face,
And I, in that sweet light, may be
Her other self in verity.

IN MEMORY OF WM. B. ROGERS.

HERE lies a man whose life was spent
In cheerful labor, calm content ;
Who ne'er relaxed his genial toil,
Nor rested 'neath its constant moil,
But with fresh vigor urged him on,
Until the goal was bravely won.
He, with fixed faith, pursued his aim,
Crowned with all honor, worth, and fame ;
With none to blame him, all to praise,
He far out-lived his noble days,
And gave, within life's meagre span,
High aid to science and to man.
Illustrious, pure, serene, and mild ;
A sage in wisdom undefiled,
And grand in his simplicity,
As children or as angels be.
And when at last came pitying death,
Half dreading then to take his breath,
He hid the terrors of his face,
And smote him swiftly in the place
Where he had gained such high renown,—
Pleased that he fell with harness on.
And we, bereaved, who knew him best,
Through life until his final rest,
Cherish the man—his liberal heart,
That gave to all a generous part,
His ready hand, his winning voice,

His love that bade all hearts rejoice,
That brought all suffering souls to be
Bound to his own in sympathy.
And as in life so lives he now,
Genial and bright as sunlight's glow ;
So live in memory to the end,
God's gentleman and priceless friend.

MIDNIGHT, DEC. 24, '84.

I BRING an offering to thy door,
A Christmas wreath with berries red :
Take it from me,—I ask no more,
For strongest thoughts are soonest said.

I am an idle, useless plant,
Lingering in God's garden plot ;
Weak, faded, insignificant,
Half careless of my future lot.

No Christmas rhymes have I to sing,
No songs or carols sweet ;
Only this modest wreath I bring,
And lay it at thy tender feet.

The holly green above the mould
Shall ever live from blemish clear ;
Shall bloom though hearts lie still and cold,
And all is dark save memory dear.

Then take it with my love, dear friend !
For love gives all things worth, I ween ;
So give me thine until the end,
And keep my memory ever green.

For my friend,
Dr. M. H. GILBERT.

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